

Israel to build 96 new homes on Golan

TEL AVIV (AP) — Plots of land for the construction of 96 homes in the occupied Golan Heights will be put up for sale this week by Israel's housing ministry, an Israeli newspaper said Monday. The homes will be built in Karzin, the largest Israeli settlement in the strategic plateau Israel seized from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war, the Haaretz daily said. The fate of the Golan Heights is at the centre of Israeli-Syrian peace talks that broke down earlier this year. Syria demands that Israel return the strategic plateau in exchange for peace. Israel has indicated it would consider only a partial withdrawal from the Golan. Peace Now, a group that monitors settlements, criticised the government decision to go ahead with the Golan construction and called it "a grave injury" to the peace process. Syrian Interior Minister Mohammad Harba meanwhile accused Israel of blocking the peace process and seeking to destabilise the Middle East, official sources said.

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Prince Hassan receives martial art teams

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Monday met Jordanians who participated in the taekwondo, karate and other martial arts championships held in Cyprus, Lebanon and Taiwan. Prince Hassan congratulated the Jordanian teams, which altogether won 17 gold, silver and bronze medals. He urged Jordanians to pursue regular training to attain better results in international championships. Prince Hassan also distributed gifts to the Jordanian athletes.

Palestinians push against Ras Al Amud plan

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Palestinian residents of Arab East Jerusalem urged Israeli parliamentarians on Monday to abandon a Jewish settlement project in the neighbourhood. The Palestinians warned members of the Knesset (parliament) interior committee visiting the Ras Al Amud quarter about the risks of an "explosion" if the project goes ahead, a parliamentary official said. The project, authorised on Dec. 10 by the Israeli interior ministry, would provide 132 homes on a block of land acquired by a Jewish-American businessman in Ras Al Amud, where 11,000 Palestinians live.

Arab ministers declare 1997 the year of Jerusalem

CAIRO (AFP) — Arab education ministers decided on Monday to make 1997 the year of Jerusalem in support of its cultural and education institutions in order to preserve its Arab identity. In a statement after a four-day meeting at Arab League headquarters in Cairo, the ministers also called on their governments to make the question of Jerusalem "a top priority." Ministers expressed concern at plans by "Israeli occupation authorities aimed at 'Judaizing' East Jerusalem and changing its Palestinian, Arab and Muslim cultural identity."

Iraqi parliament rejects plans for student fees

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq's National Assembly has rejected government plans to have students pay for part of their education, saying the move violates the constitution. The Baghdad press reported on Monday. After a heated debate, 46 deputies voted against a bill proposing that university and higher education students pay subscription fees to be able to take exams, saying it was "a violation of the constitution which stipulates that education be free." Such a move "would increase the burden of Iraqi families."

Turkey says no defence links concluded with Iran

ANKARA (R) — Turkey said on Monday it had no definite plans for defence industry cooperation with neighbouring Iran despite talks on the subject this month that worried Washington. "In that context we have neither any project nor any contract," foreign ministry spokesman Omer Akbel told a news briefing. He said defence industry cooperation was not discussed during a visit to Turkey last week by Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Israel and Palestinians reportedly near accord

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Prodded by the United States, Israel and the Palestinians were close to a deal Monday on withdrawing Israeli troops from most of Hebron, the last West Bank city under Israeli control.

U.S. President Bill Clinton's Mideast envoy Dennis Ross said he expected an agreement "soon" but would not predict when.

"There is still work to be done. But I think there is a new energy in the negotiations," he told reporters in Cairo, where he met Monday with Foreign Minister Amr Musa and President Hosni Mubarak's chief political adviser before returning to Israel.

"I am hopeful progress can be made."

Mr. Ross has been shuttling between Israel and the Palestinians for the past two days. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Mahmoud Abbas, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's top deputy, met for several hours Monday with Palestinian and Israeli negotiators. Afterward Mr. Netanyahu's office issued a statement saying the meeting "was held in a very positive atmosphere" and "showed promise of

King reviews developments with Arafat and Netanyahu

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein on Monday reviewed on the phone with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat the latest "positive" developments in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on Israeli redeployment in Hebron. King Hussein and President Arafat stressed the need to give more impetus to the peace process. The King also reviewed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the latest developments in the peace process and progress in the Palestinian-Israeli track.

advancement."

Mr. Netanyahu was meeting Monday evening with his top cabinet ministers, and was to meet later with Mr. Ross, Israel's army radio said.

"There was some progress," Mr. Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, told journalists after the talks. But when asked if a summit between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu to sign an accord was set, he replied: "Not yet."

An Israeli official told Israel Radio that Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Abbas had reached agreement on "all the main issues." "It all depends on Arafat's response when Abu Mazen reports to him now," the official said.

If Mr. Arafat approves the agreement, a summit with

Mr. Netanyahu to sign the accord could be held late Monday or early Tuesday, Israeli officials said.

A Palestinian negotiator, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a meeting Monday night between Mr. Arafat and Mr. Netanyahu at the Erez Crossing between Israel and Gaza was likely.

Israeli media reports said negotiators had reached agreement on several key areas of dispute: including opening a major road in Hebron and allowing Palestinian police to carry rifles in areas under their control.

Egypt's Middle East News Agency (MENA) said the talks also concerned joint Israeli-Palestinian security patrols and a

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Jordan pledges to aid Palestinian agriculture sector development

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti on Monday discussed with Palestinian Agriculture Minister Abdul Jawad Saleh problems facing the production and marketing of Palestinian agricultural products and expressed Jordan's willingness to help the Palestinians all possible help to overcome these obstacles.

Meeting at his office with the Palestinian minister in the presence of the Jordanian agriculture minister, Mustafa Sheneikat, Mr. Kabariti said Jordan will offer its expertise in agriculture to the Palestinians.

Speaking after the meeting Mr. Saleh said that he received a positive response from the prime minister to Palestinian requests for assistance, adding that the Israeli government's measures have been adversely affecting the Palestinian agricultural sector. Mr. Saleh called for the creation of a Jordanian-Palestinian common market with a

view to protecting common interests and said that he requested the prime minister that Jordan expand its agricultural trade with the Palestinians and exert pressure on Israel to allow the Palestinian side to import its needs from Jordan.

Mr. Sheneikat said Jordan was ready to receive Palestinian agricultural products in accordance with a fixed time table adding that Jordan will work towards removing barriers in the marketing of these products.

Mr. Saleh later met Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb and reviewed Jordanian-Palestinian economic cooperation.

The two sides agreed to hold more meetings to discuss facilities for Palestinian products to reach other Arab countries through Jordan.

People of East and West Banks of Jordan should reject differences and adopt common stand, activists say

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanians and Palestinians enjoy a unique relationship that has survived all political upheavals in the region and both people, who share a common destiny, should not allow political differences between regimes to stand in their way, activists said Monday.

The activists spoke on the third day of a six-day conference entitled "The Option of Dialogue" organised by the Jordanian Writers' Association (JWA).

The speakers, who took the audience on a trip through the common history of the East and West Banks from the days of the Ottoman Empire to the Oslo agreement and the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, criticised the title of Monday's session — "The Jordanian-Palestinian relationship."

"The title should be the Arab relationship between hopes of unification and the divisionalism of regionalism," said Bahjat Abu Gharbiyeh, a veteran political activist.

Mr. Abu Gharbiyeh stressed that colonialism divided the Arab World at the beginning of this century. But the different political regimes followed the colonialism not only fought against a united Arab World but also used "jingoism to serve their own interests."

Mr. Abu Gharbiyeh noted that during the early part of this century, Emir Abdullah, the founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and Haj Amin Al Husseini, a prominent Palestinian leader, had "their differences, but those differences were never reflected on the relationship between the one people."

Rizq Bataineh, a former deputy, echoed Mr. Abu Gharbiyeh's point and added that political differences affected only the "formal relationship between the leaderships."

"Now certain elements from both sides are raising jingoistic questions like who is a Jordanian and who is a Palestinian," said Mr. Bataineh. Whoever raises such a question, he said, "is neither Jordanian nor Palestinian," he said.

Yaqoub Zayadin, a communist leader, spoke of Jordanian-Palestinian history.

People from the East Bank of River Jordan had always been ardent supporters of the Palestinian struggle, he said, recalling that "even the songs we sang during weddings here were revolutionary and in support of the Palestinian struggle."

The consensus that emerged from Tuesday's discussions was that the Jordanian-Palestinian relationship took a dramatic turn in the wake of the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in 1964. From that point onward, they said, the relationship faced difficulties, including the disturbances that Jordan saw in 1970.

Sa'ed Al Tal, a senator and a former minister, said that the recognition of the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the Rabat summit in 1974, Jordan's decision in 1988 to disengage itself administratively and legally from the

(Continued on page 7)



A man dressed as Jesus Christ carries a cross while participating in a peace rally in Lima on Sunday. Thousands of people organised a rally in solidarity with the hostages that are being held at the Japanese ambassador's residence by Peruvian rebels demanding the release of their colleagues held in Peruvian jails (Reuters photo)

Peru rebels free 225 more hostages, but government says no concessions

LIMA (Agencies) — Rebels held a paraded group of 140 valuable hostages Monday at the Japanese ambassador's residence and settled in for a sixth day of tough bargaining. Their "Christmas gesture" of freeing 225 people brought no immediate concessions from Peru's government.

The rebels are demanding the government release about 300 of their jailed comrades. President Alberto Fujimori has refused.

The 225 hostages freed Sunday night appeared weary as they filed out the front door of the residence and boarded hospital buses and vans. Some waved from bus windows while thousands of supporters in the streets shouted joyfully.

The Red Cross said 140 men were still inside, mostly Peruvian officials and Japanese businessmen. Ambassadors from Japan, Malaysia, Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay also remained.

Mr. Fujimori's younger brother, Pedro, is among those still held, the El Comercio newspaper quoted the president's former wife, Susana Higuchi, as saying.

A spokesman for the rebels meanwhile warned any attempt to free the hostages by force could lead to their deaths.

"In every war, there are deaths. In the case of an assault, the way Fujimori's government envisages it, the hostages will probably die," Isaac Velazco said, during a press conference here.

"What is happening here is cold reality. There will be no movie ending, with a Rambo or Sylvester Stallone," he said replying to rumours of a U.S. intervention.

"Those who remain in the embassy today are those who took part in the state political terrorism of President Fujimori or who supported him."

The remaining hostages include Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela. The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) has set four conditions for the hostages' release — the abandonment of President Fujimori's "neo-liberal politics," the release for more than 400 imprisoned MRTA members, their transport to the Amazonian forests and the government's payment of a "war tax" to the country's poor.

In Tokyo, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto pledged Monday that Japan would do its best to secure the freedom of the hostages still held by the rebels.

"We are now working for the release of all the hostages," the premier told reporters after meeting Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda who had just returned home after a four-day mission in the Peruvian capital.

The premier refused to comment on what further steps the Japanese government would take to help solve the hostage standoff which began last Tuesday when MRTA rebels took over the residence.

"The MRTA is getting information from the mass media. I don't want to give them even once piece of information," Mr. Hashimoto said.

But he added: "We are awaiting the earliest possible solution of the situation while placing utmost trust in the Peruvian government directly charged with the negotiations."

difficult from now. We will put all our efforts into helping all the hostages come back safely."

Earlier, Mr. Hashimoto voiced concern for the remaining hostages. "I first heard the number of people to be released would be between 80 and 100," Mr. Hashimoto told reporters.

"More than double were freed. But it also means, pressure on the remaining people has increased," he said.

"I would like to say 'good for you' to people released, but I'm worried about heavy pressure on the remaining captives," he reportedly said at his official residence.

"The guerrillas reduced the hostages to the number that they can control. This has intensified tension," he noted. Mr. Ikeda faced strong criticism for leaving Peru while the hostage drama dragged on in the diplomatic compound.

Japanese newspapers harshly criticised Mr. Hashimoto's decision to recall Mr. Ikeda even before the rebels had released the 225 hostages.

"...The foreign minister's return at a time when there is no clear prospect of a settlement of the crisis might give countries concerned an impression that the Japanese government is weak-kneed," the major daily Asahi Shimbun said.

The White House meanwhile, welcomed the release of the American hostages and called for the immediate release of the remaining captives.

"The president welcomes the safe release of the Americans who were held hostage in Lima and renews his call for the immediate release of all who continue to be held in the Japanese ambassador's residence," a White House statement said.

Saraireh withdraws resignation

By the Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Minister of Post and Telecommunications Jamal Saraireh on Monday withdrew the resignation that he had submitted to the prime minister on Saturday.

After a Cabinet session on Monday evening Mr. Saraireh declined to say why he rescinded his decision.

"I hold no grudge against the prime minister," Mr. Saraireh said.

The minister, who in his letter of resignation described the premier as "haughty" and accused him of disrespect for his colleagues three days ago, retracted his statements on Monday.

Earlier in the day, sources said efforts by ministers and deputies to mediate between the premier and Mr. Saraireh had failed. Mr. Saraireh, the sources said, was determined not to withdraw his resignation.

It was not immediately clear what changed Mr. Saraireh's mind.

But well-informed sources said Mr. Saraireh was summoned to the Royal Court on Monday and was received by His Majesty King Hussein. No details were available on the meeting.

Mr. Saraireh, along with other ministers, were in a very jolly mood after Monday's Cabinet meeting and acted as if the resignation had not taken place.

Minister of Information Marwan Muasher, in a briefing to the press following the Cabinet meeting, said the resignation was based on personal considerations. He said that the prime minister and Mr. Saraireh met privately shortly before the Cabinet meeting. Ministers interviewed by the Jordan Times said that the resignation was not brought up during the Cabinet meeting.

Newspaper prices increased

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The price of four Jordanian daily newspapers will be raised by 50 fils with effect from Jan. 1, 1997 to offset a government tax of 25 per cent on newsprint, according to a decision taken by their managements.

Accordingly, the new-stand prices of Al Ra'i, Al Dustour and Al Aswaq, the three Arabic-language dailies, and the Jordan Times, the only English-language daily, will be 200 fils each.

"The decision is purely economic," said Seif Al Sharif, director-general of the Jordan Press and Publications Company, publishers of Al Dustour. Mr. Sharif said the decision was taken jointly by the publishers of the four newspapers and they were not bound to seek government approval for the move.

Mr. Sharif said the publishers should have raised the prices as of July 1, 1996, when the government lifted a six-month tax

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Egypt seeks to reassure Israel war not on agenda

Israeli general sees instability in Mideast as a reason not to rule out possibility of war

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Egypt's foreign minister has assured Israelis his country has no intention of going to war with them, promising in an interview published on Monday to strive to rescue Middle East peace.

"We are not talking about war — rather the failure of the peace process, the dangers," Foreign Minister Amr Musa told Israel's biggest daily Yedioth Ahronoth when asked about fears in Israel of another war with the Arabs.

Since right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in June, relations with the Arab World have worsened and opinion polls show Israelis are increasingly jittery over the possibility of war.

"War doesn't appear in our lexicon... after all we have done and accomplished, we'll not go to war. We'll act in the political and diplomatic realm to rescue the peace process," said Mr. Musa, whose country in 1979 became the first Arab state to sign a treaty with the Jewish state.

"But it's impossible to talk peace with a partner who doesn't believe in peace," Mr. Musa said.

The Arab World has denounced Mr. Netanyahu's commitment to expanding Jewish settlements on occupied Arab land and his rejection of the land-for-peace formula of the left-centre government he narrowly ousted in May.

"The expansion of the settlements and building in the territories poison the atmosphere," Mr. Musa said.

Mr. Musa said he hoped a meeting between Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday would offer something positive, adding:

"The negative we already know."

"I don't blame all of the Israelis," Mr. Musa added.

"We know 68 per cent are unhappy with the Netanyahu government's performance. The time has come to sit and examine together how to rescue the process from the destructive approach of the Netanyahu government," he added.

Israel's air force intelligence chief said in an interview released on Sunday the probability of war with the Arabs could no longer be characterised as low, and that Syria remained "Israel's number one confrontation state".

Mr. Mubarak said on Saturday Israel must make concessions in peace talks with Palestinians, rejecting the U.S. view that Israeli gestures towards a deal on the West Bank town of Hebron made it the Palestinians' turn to reciprocate.

The Israeli officer, identified as Brigadier-General G., also told the air force magazine in an interview released late on Sunday that if Iran were to possess nuclear weapons, Israel would consider this "an intolerable situation".

"Today, it cannot be said that the probability of war remains low, such as it was in the past," G. said.

Israel and Syria have traded accusations of escalating tensions as both sides staged military exercises on the Golan front.

Syria is "still defined as Israel's number one confrontation state", G. said.

"Peace talks with Syria have stopped, and have yet to resume. Therefore the question of whether (Syrian President Hafez) Al Assad has taken a strategic decision to reach peace with Israel remains unclear."

G. said that in recent years the climate of Middle

East peace talks had convinced Israel's intelligence community that the probability of war was low, and that the "enemy had chosen the path of peace from a strategic standpoint, and wanted to walk forward with us".

But a lack of stability over the past year has made such assessments impossible, G. said.

Turning to Iran and the possibility of Tehran acquiring nuclear arms, G. said: "It is a mission of all the world to keep that country away from a nuclear capability. If it should achieve such a capability, from the point of view of the State of Israel that would be an intolerable situation." He did not elaborate.

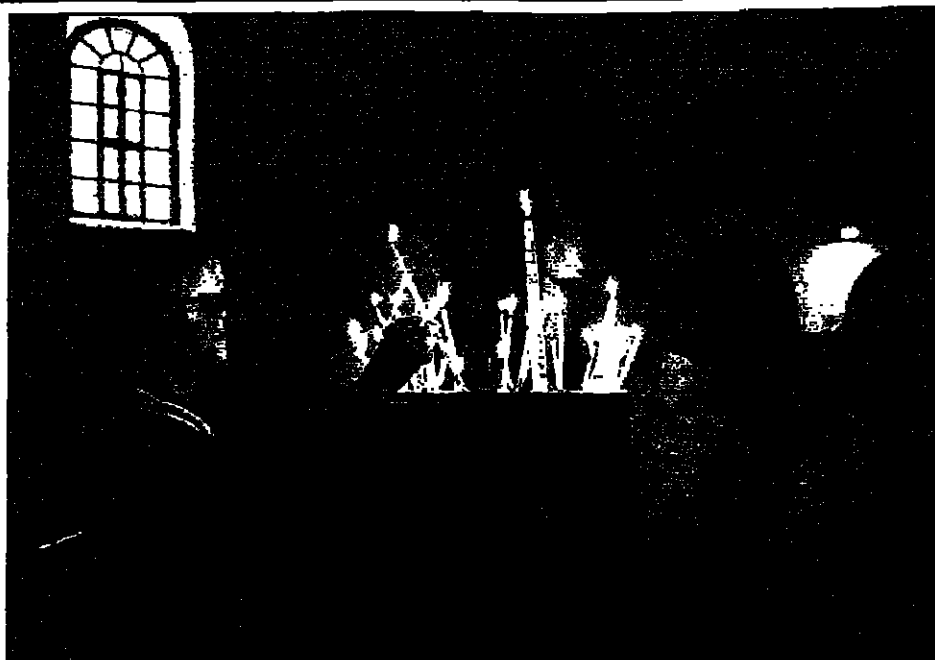
Israel is widely believed to possess an arsenal of some 200 atomic weapons. In 1981, fearing Iraq was on the verge of developing nuclear weaponry, Israel sent warplanes to bomb a reactor complex near Baghdad.

Israel is "not threatening war" against Arab countries, its new ambassador to Egypt, Zvi Mazel, said in Cairo on Monday after his first meeting with Foreign Minister Musa.

Their talks covered Egyptian-Israeli relations and developments in the Middle East peace process, Mr. Mazel told reporters.

Mr. Netanyahu "told me before my departure for Cairo that peace is the aim of the entire world, whether it be Israel, Egypt or the Palestinians," said Mr. Mazel, who took up his post on Dec. 16.

He expressed hope that negotiations between Israel and Syria, which have been on ice since February, would be resumed and said he wanted a strengthening of economic cooperation in the Middle East.



CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM: Visiting Christian tourists light candles on Monday in the Church of the Nativity, traditional birth place of Jesus Christ, in Bethlehem. The annual Christmas Eve procession will take place in Bethlehem on Tuesday when thousands of Christian pilgrims will visit and pray at the site where Jesus was born (Reuters photo)

Chang visit not official and has no impact on China ties — Jordan

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan has explained to the Chinese government that last week's visit to the Kingdom by the foreign minister of Taiwan was not an official trip and had no impact on Amman's relations with Beijing. Information Minister Muasher said Monday.

It was the first official Jordanian comment on the visit of John Chang, who arrived here Wednesday and left Friday. During the visit, Mr. Chang addressed a faculty of Yarmouk University, which also conferred upon him an honorary doctorate.

"The minister did have other engagements in Jordan, including lunch and dinner meetings," according to a source, who declined to give further details.

Before arriving in Amman, Mr. Chang also visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He returned home from Jordan.

The visit "drew strong indignation" from the Chinese government, which considers Taiwan as a rebel

province and strongly opposes contacts between Taiwanese officials and governments of countries which has diplomatic relations with Beijing.

Dr. Muasher, replying to a question raised at a regular weekly briefing on Monday, said the government had not extended an official invitation to Mr. Chang.

"It was strictly a private visit," said Dr. Muasher. "We have explained to the Chinese government that the visit did not come in response to a Jordanian government invitation."

"We have also explained that the visit was not treated as an official trip and there were no official meetings with Mr. Chang," added the minister.

The minister's comments implicitly confirmed that the government had received a protest from Beijing through the Chinese diplomatic mission in Amman.

In Beijing, the Chinese Foreign Ministry on Thursday expressed its displeasure over the Taiwanese minister's visit to the UAE and Jordan.

"We have expressed our regrets and our strong indignation over countries including Jordan for officially receiving Mr. Chang," foreign ministry spokesman Shen Guofang was quoted as telling a regular news conference.

"We hope that all countries concerned hold strictly to the principle of one China, and that they be vigilant regarding Taiwanese initiatives aimed at harming relations across the Taiwan Strait," Mr. Shen added.

"We hope such instances are not repeated, otherwise it could seriously affect relations between these countries and China," said Mr. Shen.

In his comments on Monday, Dr. Muasher said Mr. Chang's visit to Jordan did not imply "in any manner whatsoever" a shift in the Kingdom's recognition of China and Amman's diplomatic relations with Beijing.

"We have assured the Chinese government that the Taiwanese foreign minister's visit here had no impact on our relations with China," he said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Kuwait wedding shots jeopardise aviation

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait's aviation authority said people firing bullets in the air to express joy at weddings have jeopardised airplanes, a newspaper reported on Monday. "Several civil airplanes have been exposed to fire arms shooting in the Kuwaiti air field and had to change their courses," Al Watan newspaper reported a letter by the civil aviation authority to the interior ministry as saying. "On Oct. 24 two airplanes — Kuwaiti and American — were exposed to shooting from a wedding in the area south of the airport," said the letter. "Other airplanes have suffered similar incidents ... this could result in catastrophes." In many Middle Eastern countries people fire bullets in the air to express happiness at weddings. The Interior Ministry ordered strict monitoring on weddings held in areas listed by the aviation authority, said the paper. It did not say if any airplane suffered damage due to the shootings.

Every fourth Israeli child lives in poverty

TEL AVIV (AFP) — One out of four Israeli children lived below the poverty line last year, according to a report presented to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday. Yitzhak Kedman, president of the national council for the wellbeing of children, who handed the report to the prime minister, said a large percentage of the children were of Arab origin. A total 454,000 children, or 25 per cent lived in poverty in 1995, according to the report cited by the Idm news agency. Mr. Netanyahu said he would seek to give both Jewish and Arab children a better future through his work for peace. In 1995, Israel had 1,955,460 children — 34.8 per cent of the total population.

Bashir ends tax exemption for charities

KHARTOUM (AP) — President Omar Al Bashir has waived certain tax exemptions for charities operating in Sudan, the finance minister said Sunday. Gen. Bashir's provisional decree followed parliament's move Thursday to defer for three months a government bill to end the exemptions. Finance Minister Abdul Wahab Osman reportedly left the parliament building on Thursday furious over the rejection of his proposal, which he said was designed to end tax evasion and uncover charities which have effectively become businesses. Mr. Osman said last week that the tax exemption enjoyed by 66 charities in Sudan has given rise to corruption and provided a cover for illegal profit making. In a hurriedly arranged news conference Sunday, he read to reporters excerpts from Gen. Al Bashir's decree. "taxes should be collected for profits obtained from any commercial activity," it said. "Regardless of any special ruling or any other law that grants customs exemptions, customs fees should be collected for all commodities imported or exported for commercial purposes."

Saudis behead Sudanese convicted of murder

RIYADH (AP) — A Sudanese man convicted of murder was beheaded Monday in the capital of Riyadh, the Interior Ministry said. Osama ben Omar Ben Yousef Hassan was found guilty of fatally stabbing Mohammed Ben Bader Al Otaibi, a Saudi, after a fight, the statement said. Hassan's execution brought to 71 the number of people beheaded this year under the kingdom's strict interpretation of Islamic law. The statement did not say where or when the crime took place. Arab and Western human rights organizations have criticised the beheadings, saying defendants often are executed without a fair trial. A record 192 people were beheaded last year in Saudi Arabia.

Weizman to visit India next week

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman will arrive here next week for official talks aimed at cementing ties between India and the Jewish state, a government spokesman said Monday. Mr. Weizman's groundbreaking trip beginning Dec. 29 will be the first official visit to India by an Israeli head of state. The External Affairs Ministry spokesman said Israel and India would sign three separate accords for cooperation in the fields of science, technology and culture during the Israeli president's week-long visit. Mr. Weizman will have "wide-ranging discussions" with his Indian counterpart, Shankar Dayal Sharma, Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda and other leaders, he said. The spokesman said the landmark visit by the Israeli leader was aimed at further "consolidating and expanding political, economic and trade links with India." He will also tour the Taj Mahal city of Agra, Bangalore, hub of India's aeronautical industry, Bombay, the country's commercial capital and the port city of Cochin and leave on Jan. 5, the official added. Mr. Weizman's trip is the first since 1993 when then Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres visited Delhi for further rapprochement between India and the Jewish state which established diplomatic ties in 1992 after 40 years of hostility. Since then, the two countries signed several accords and have granted most favoured nation (mfn) status to each other as part of a bilateral blueprint to boost two-way trade. India is home to a tiny Jewish community numbering only thousands, most of them in Bombay.

Bedouins put up stiff fight against first Egyptian nuclear power plant

MARSA MATRUH (AFP) — The Egyptian parliament this week will seek to resolve a decade-long dispute with Mediterranean-coast bedouins over building a nuclear power plant on land that has been theirs since time immemorial.

"The parliament is due to study this week a report written by its commission for examining citizens' complaints, to end bedouin opposition to the construction of the power plant at Al Daba'a," Sebeita Fayed Barakat, a member of parliament from the town, told AFP.

A study completed in

1984 by French company Framatome concluded that the best place to build a 900-megawatt pressurised-water-reactor nuclear power plant would be on the edge of the town of Daba'a, 388 kilometres northwest of Cairo, half way between Alexandria and Marsa Matruh.

The government gave the electricity ministry's nuclear plant authority 45 square kilometres of land which was occupied by bedouins.

However, Cairo suspended the project after the 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl plant in Ukraine, and the

Nuclear Plant Authority closed the site.

The authority, which had already given five million Egyptian pounds (\$1.5 million) in damages to the bedouins, is expected to pay them another five million pounds soon. Authority President Sayed Baheeddin said.

"The nuclear plant authority has paid them for the olive and fig trees, but does not recognise property titles for the land which 62 bedouins have submitted," Faisal Abdel Wahed, director of the municipal councils of Marsa Matruh province, told AFP.

The parliamentary commission report offers to agree to the additional payments and calls for the government to quickly begin building the power plant, several deputies said.

Since the beginning of the 1980s, the 280-kilometre-long coast between Alexandria and Marsa Matruh has been targeted by developers building dozens of tourist villages, providing the bedouins with construction jobs.

"Only those at Daba'a are deprived of these means because land for the power plant project occupies the entire coast, preventing any

tourism project," Mr. Barakat said.

The bedouins have entered the unsupervised enclosure put up by the authority, an AFP reporter observed.

Close to 500 families are living on the land. Small homes, a mosque and four schools built before the land was confiscated are still in use.

Questioned by AFP, the residents accused the Nuclear Plant Authority of asking the local authorities to cut off the water supply.

Egypt, which adheres to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, during the

1960s installed an experimental two-megawatt mini-reactor at Inshass in the Nile Delta.

Cairo is to get a sophisticated 25-megawatt Argentine reactor in September for research purposes. Electricity Minister Maher Abaza said. He did not say where it would be set up.

It does not look like the Daba'a power plant will be built soon. Recently, the Nuclear Plant Authority president confined himself to saying that "some Egyptian technicians had been trained to operate the Daba'a power plant."

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 Budgie (The Little Helicopter)
14:20 Captain Planet
14:40 Comedy — I Love Lucy
15:00 Sciences Cartoon
15:15 Magazine — Montagne
16:00 At The Zoo
16:30 Documentary
17:00 News Flash
17:42 Fun With Physics
17:15 Drama — Cyclone Tracy
18:00 Serie — La Lumiere des Justes
19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Extra Large
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Murphy Brown
20:00 Magazine — Zero One
20:30 Christmas in Connecticut
22:00 News in English
22:25 Comedy — Something Wilder
23:15 Mission Impossible
23:59 Christmas Show — Sound of Christmas

PRAYER TIMES

05:05 Fajr
06:28 (Sunrise) Duha
11:35 Dhuhur
14:19 'Asr
16:41 Maghreb
18:04 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sveithel. Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church

Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel.
661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel.
622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church
Tel.

771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel.
771751.

Armenian International Church
Tel. 652526

Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

westerly moderate to active. In
Aqaba, it will be warm and
sunny with winds northerly
moderate and seas calm.

Amman06/16
Aqaba10/23
Deserts04/19
Jordan Valley11/23

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 15, Aqaba 23 Humidity
readings: Amman 73 per cent,
Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mukkles Halaseh
.....819220
Dr. Fadil Al Khatib865456
Dr. Rami Sukkar86457
Dr. Yousef Al Faqih790104
Ferdows pharmacy778336
Al Asema pharmacy637055
Al Salam pharmacy636730
Yacoub pharmacy644945
Shmeisani pharmacy637660
Nairokh pharmacy623672
Najib pharmacy847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu281484
Al Quds pharmacy(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Rabah Al Bourini 9903012
Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre637111
Civil Defence Dept.661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
.....630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 621111.
637777
Fire Brigade617101
Blood Bank775121
Highway Police843402
Traffic Police896390
Public Security Department
.....630321
Hotel Complaints605800
Price Complaints661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints
.....897467
Amman Municipality Complaints
.....787111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance)121
Overseas Calls010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs
661101
Jordan Television773111
Radio Jordan774111
Water Authority680100
Jordan Electricity Authority
.....815615
Electric Power Company
636381
RJ Flight Information
0853200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-
53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre
81381/332
Khalidi Maternity644281/6
Akileh Maternity642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity
.....642362
Malhas, J. Amman636140
Palestine, Shmeisani607071
Shmeisani Hospital669131
University Hospital845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir775111/26
Army, Marka891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital
602240/50
Amal Hospital674155
The Arab Centre for Heart
and Special Surgery865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital
.....(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
.....(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital
.....(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital
.....(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafes Hospital
.....(02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Sanan (RJ)
07:25Damascus (RJ)
08:35Tuzor (add) (RJ)
09:25Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15Beirut (RJ)
10:15Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
15:25London (RJ)
16:20Cairo (RJ)
16:35Frankfurt (RJ)
17:15 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:15Jakarta (add) (RJ)
21:00 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta,
Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)
22:45 Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (add)
(RJ)
03:00 Jeddah (add) — two
flights (RJ)
05:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

07:30London (KJ)
07:35Damascus, London (BA)
11:30Cairo (MS)
15:00Kiev (6U)
15:45Munich (YP)
17:40Rome (AZ)
19:15Dubai (EK)
22:50Tel Aviv (LY)
00:40Beirut, Amsterdam (KL)
01:00Aden (TY)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
07:45Beirut (ME)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:20Aqaba (RW)
12:00Aqaba (RW)
18:55Tel Aviv (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

06:20Beirut (RJ)
08:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05 Amsterdam, Montreal,
Toronto (RJ)
11:15Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
12:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:15Cairo (RJ)
12:30Frankfurt (RJ)
13:30Paris (add) (RJ)
20:00Singapore (add) (RJ)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
21:00Damascus, Larnaca (RJ)
22:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:45 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)
01:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
05:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

05:05London (KJ)
10:35Cairo (MS)
13:50Kiev (6U)
14:05Munich (YP)
16:30Rome (AZ)
18:15Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:10Beirut (ME)
21:40Tel Aviv (LY)
23:40Amsterdam (KL)
23:59Aden (TY)

HJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 a.m. every
Monday

Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every
Monday

Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every
Sunday

Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every
Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upperflower price in fils per kg.

Apple700/500
Banana550/550
Banana (imported)850/600
Cabbage60/40
Carrot260/120
Cauliflower130/100
Cucumber (large)120/80
Cucumber (small)210/160
Eggplant140/80
Garlic850/600
Grape fruit150/100
Lemon390/250
Marrow (large)80/40
Marrow (small)130/100
Onion (green)160/100
Onion (dry)170/80
Orange560/400
Pepper (hot)240/150
Pepper (sweet)190/100
Potato260/160
Spinach150/100
String Bean370/300
Tomato150/100

Home News

Former minister passes away in Switzerland

AMMAN (J.T.) — Dr. Saleh Burgan, former member of Parliament and the Senate, who died in Switzerland Saturday at the age of 78, will today be laid to rest in Geneva next to his son Walid.

Family members told the Jordan Times that the late Dr. Burgan is survived by three children: Khaled, Saad and Suha as well as his wife who live in Switzerland and Canada.

Born in 1918, in the southern town of Karak, Dr. Burgan studied at the American University of Beirut, where he graduated as doctor of medicine and surgery in 1943, and served as a physician until 1948 with the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force before opening a private practice in Zafra between 1948 and 1963.



Dr. Saleh Burgan

Dr. Burgan served as member of Parliament during 1961 and 1962, member of the Senate between 1963 and 1969, minister of health during 1963 and 1964, minister of social affairs and labour between 1966 and

1967, after which he again served briefly as minister of health and social affairs. He also headed Jordanian delegations to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conferences in Geneva and later served as director of the ILO office in Beirut between 1969 and 1975 and as Assistant Director General of the ILO in Geneva between 1975 and 1984.

The late Dr. Burgan held membership to Arab and foreign associations, held the medal of the Star of Jordan of the first order and commander of the Holy Sepulchre.

Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti offered his condolences over the former minister's death.

Universities to co-host seminar on breaking stereotypes

By Maysa Ibrahim
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The University of Jordan and Birmingham University in Britain have announced a conference entitled "Arabs and the West" to be held in Amman in September of 1997, according to Vice President of the University of Jordan Dr. Sami Khasawneh.

Jorgen Nielson of the Centre of the Study of Islam of Birmingham University arrived in Amman on December 10 for discussions with Dr. Khasawneh.

In a Monday interview with the Jordan Times, Dr. Khasawneh stated that the "conference is intended to isolate and highlight cultural similarities and differences between Arabs and the Western world and the resultant problems in communication between the two. The conference has been proposed to brainstorm ways of actively cooperating and understanding each other and for ways to rectify the Arab image in the Western world and vice-versa, with the aim of activating cultural relations between East and West."

The conference is also intended to focus on Arabs in the western media.

school curricula and contemporary theatre as well as westerners in the corresponding Arab categories. Reactions to these images in their economic, sociological and political perspectives will also be studied, the vice-president affirmed.

Seminars referring to the West, will be limited to a study of Europe, a selection Dr. Khasawneh deemed as logical.

"This area has a long-standing relationship with Europe," he said.

The University of Jordan "will be approaching the European Union and European cultural organisations as well as Jordanian agencies for financial support," he stated.

Birmingham University will also be inviting foreign journalists and academics and the University of Jordan hopes to invite Arab experts.

The two agreed, during Dr. Nielson's visit to offer two-year automatically renewable contracts between the universities, detailing the exchange programme. The programme is to include exchanges of faculty members, research programmes, library materials and students, he said.

Mut'a University creates artefact museum

MUT'A (Petra) — Mut'a University, near the southern town of Karak, Monday announced the creation of a special museum for training history and archaeology university students.

Head of the University's Antiquities and Tourism Faculty Taleh Smadi described artefacts stored in the museum as dating as far back as 7000 B.C.

Dr. Smadi suggested that the museum serves as a nucleus for the creation of an integrated national museum in Jordan as it stores rare artefacts belonging to various historic epochs, reflecting the different civilisations which prospered both in the Kingdom and the Middle East over the past centuries.

The artefacts displayed currently have all been excavated in the Karak governorate, he said, however maintaining that his department's teams are pursuing digs in a number of areas located southeast of Karak, Wadi Mujib and Ghor Safi with history students and their teachers involved in the excavations.

Dr. Smadi requested that residents of these

areas report any found artefacts and antiquities as these, he said, constitute part of the national heritage and retain value for their indication of various regional cultures over the past ages.

Museum Director Mohammad Mahasneh categorised the museum's collection as filling one of three types:

- Artefacts which date back to the bronze age — between 3200 and 2900 B.C. — and which include jewellery, daggers, mother of pearl, pottery and spears.
- Artefacts which date back from between 7000 and 6000 B.C. and include primitive instruments, weapons and tools as well as ornaments and table plates.
- Stones upon which are carved sketches demonstrating coins in circulation over the past ages, denoting the different empires which ruled the area.

Dr. Mahasneh invited the public to visit the museum, stating that the collection housed therein can contribute to research.

Seminar emphasises environmental sustainability

By Sacha Baggili
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The importance of sustainability was the central message of a workshop regarding integrated environmental management of the Azraq Basin co-hosted yesterday by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Azraq Oasis Conservation Project (AOCOP).

In 1993, the UNDP resolved to use financing available through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to address the ecological crisis in Azraq caused by the alarming escalation of water pumping from the basin for municipal and agricultural uses.

The project was mobilised in cooperation with various government agencies and the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) and it became one of the world's first which attempted to restore an arid zone wetland ecosystem.

Convening under the patronage of Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Environment Abdel Razzaq Tubeishat, the workshop opened with keynote speeches by Head of the AOCOP's Management Unit Ghaili Fariz, UNDP Resident Representative Jorgan Lissner, President of the University of Jordan Fawzi Ghuraibeh, and Anis Muasher, president of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature.

Dr. Muasher opened his talk by praising the success of the AOCOP's operation in bringing life back to the ecosystem of the Azraq Basin as he did the excellent cooperation between authorities and organisations involved in the Azraq project.

However, he admonished that "the government must take the problem of over-pumping, which still exists, more seriously. This is the only way to sustain life which has been brought back to the Azraq Basin through the technique of reverse-pumping, clean up operations and the deepening of the wadis to channel more rainfall into the reserve."

In an interview with the Jordan Times, Dr. Muasher confirmed that the technique of reverse pumping, or draining water from a surplus area into the Azraq Basin, has only solved one component of the entire dilemma.

Although the oasis has been replenished to a healthy level and wildlife has gradually returned and the ecosystem has improved, Dr. Muasher stated that as the Azraq Basin constitutes a "meeting area for geographical formations. The current over-pumping of the reservoir is causing a harmful rise in salt levels in the fresh water, as the balance in pressure between this water source and the nearby brine reservoir is being disturbed."

Dr. Fariz, told the Jordan Times that, despite the success of the project, so far, "pumping from the Azraq basin still stands at 50 million cubic meters per year, twice its natural rechargeable capacity; unless the issue of over pumping is addressed, the newly replenished ecosystem will not be sustained and the situation will never be completely solved."

He also stated that the rehabilitation of the Azraq Oasis and supporting lake networks constituted only one-fifth of the project's activity in the Azraq Basin.

Participants in the workshop discussed existing programmes aiming to sustain the "health" of the ecosystem, which exist as sub-projects of the AOCOP. These include the Agricultural sub-project which has been undertaking extensive and detailed surveys of Azraq soil capabilities and the Environmental Impact Assessment sub-project which is currently working to produce a manual as a guideline for maintaining wetlands all over the country, based on the Azraq experience, Dr. Fariz said.

He also told the Jordan Times that other existing problems threatening sustainability, such as the illegal pumping of water and the illegal creation of wells were addressed during the workshop.

Mr. Lissner emphasised the importance of cooperation between the UNDP and

the government in the ecological preservation and replenishment of the Azraq Basin.

"The return of life to Azraq appears as nothing short of a miracle, but the battle is not yet over. The battle now is sustainability," he said.

According to information issued by the UNDP, although pumping from the Azraq springs began in the 1960's to supply the cities of Amman and Irbid with water, it was the late 1970's which saw the extraction explosion.

This situation was compounded in the 1980's as the economy expanded and population increased.

The consequences were, reportedly, disastrous. Springs, lakes and marshes dried up and foliage and wildlife disappeared. The underground water table dramatically decreased and the salinity of water and soil surged.

"The local community in Azraq suffered greatly from the collapse of the ecosystem," Dr. Fariz said.

"In recognition of this suffering, the Society of Azraq Oasis Friends was founded, creating a vocal grassroots movement," he continued.

Members of this society participated in the workshop along with government officials, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and environmental experts.

Ministry announces drop in bread prices

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Supply Munir Subar Monday announced a cut of nearly 10 per cent in bread prices beginning in January of 1997.

This translates into sales of a kilo of high quality bread at 200 fils while bread with local flour and specifications will be offered at 170 fils per kilo, he said.

The minister affirmed that a special ministerial committee has been studying wheat prices in global markets and confirmed the drop of such.

The Ministry of Supply has bought 150,000 tonnes of wheat at new global market prices, he said.

The wheat, Mr. Subar stated, was delivered in November and December

and purchased at the new rate of \$164.90 a tonne, thereby registering a 40 per cent drop from six months previous.

Last month, His Majesty King Hussein instructed the government to scrutinise bread prices in light of the newly priced wheat reaching local consumers.

Mr. Subar spoke following a meeting with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti to discuss prices and market conditions.

He said that Mr. Kabariti instructed him to institute the new prices as of the beginning of 1997.

During the meeting with the prime minister, also attended by Finance Minister Marwan Awad, discussion covered a range of issues concerning the sup-

ply situation as well as Ministry of Supply plans to provide sufficient food commodities to the local markets during the coming month of Ramadan, expected to commence on Jan 10.

They also spoke of poultry stores which have been scarce in local markets recently.

Mr. Subar quoted the prime minister as instructing the Ministry of Supply to sell poultry frozen in its warehouses to meet the shortage.

He stated that he briefed the prime minister on the supply situation and described private sector merchants as now importing and selling sugar and rice.

Mr. Subar also said that

the ministry is encouraging the private sector to gradually replace the ministry in supplying markets with these two commodities.

He also announced that as of 1997 the Ministry of Supply will also halt imports of foreign cigarettes and will leave this task to the private sector.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Supply Monday announced that it has made preparations for securing commodities to Jordan during the month of Ramadan jointly with private sector merchants.

The ministry said that inspection teams will apply strict controls to ensure that there will be no manipulation nor profiteering on the part of merchants.

Jordan cements agricultural agreements with EU, Lebanon

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has reached an initial agreement with the European Union (EU) regarding the exportation of produce and other agricultural products to Europe, Minister of Agriculture Mustafa Sheikhat announced Monday.

He confirmed that the agreement came through Jordan-EU talks directed towards concluding a partnership accord.

Addressing representatives of the Jordanian Farmers Association (JFA), the minister said that Jordan, which currently exports limited amounts of produce to Europe, has agreed to export increased quantities of potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, onions, squash, beans, grapes, olives and tomato paste.

He maintained that once the agreement has been implemented and exports are underway many current marketing problems will end and that the ministry will continue in its endeavours to cement official links with various foreign markets.

Dr. Sheikhat pledged the government's investment in battling problems facing farmers, especially that of commercial mar-

kets.

He urged the farmers to increase their production of dates, cereals and grapes which boast a major market home and abroad.

Dr. Sheikhat urged high-quality grading and packaging of well-tended crops, without which, he admonished, they will not find any market.

The minister also enumerated that in 1996 the designated area for wheat cultivation increased from 800,000 dunums to 1.3 million dunums.

He announced that the ministry has plans to create two firms to specialise in fruit and vegetable exportation and asserted that the Europeans have expressed interest in joining in partnership with these businesses in order to guarantee the sale of Jordanian products in European markets.

During a meeting previous to that of the farmers' association, Head of the JFA Mamdouh Adwan presented the minister with a list of dilemmas which local farmers avoid their face.

Director General of the Agricultural Marketing Organisation (AMO) Dr. Saleem Lawzi also attend-

ed the meeting.

Meanwhile, earlier this week, Mr. Lawzi announced that Lebanon will abide by the provisions of a protocol signed with Jordan last September regarding the exchange of agricultural products.

He also announced that Lebanon will not place any restrictions on the number of products exported from the Kingdom nor will it require an advance permit for the entry of said crops to Lebanese markets.

Dr. Lawzi told the Jordan Times that these agreements were instituted during three days of talks held with the Lebanese Minister of Agriculture Samir Fakhouri and his senior assistants.

"Jordan will continue to export unlimited squash, eggplant, pepper, beans and onions from now until April 1997 and tomatoes as of the beginning of 1997 as delineated by the agricultural protocol," Dr. Lawzi added.

"In view of unusually warm weather in Lebanon, the country has been producing its own agricultural products, prompting the Lebanese

government to ban imports from Jordan unless import licences were issued in advance," he said.

This measure has naturally adversely affected Jordan's exports to Lebanese markets, Dr. Lawzi said and reiterated that this prompted an emergency visit to Beirut to resolve the situation.

He cautioned Jordanian exporters to ship excellent quality products in reasonable quantities to Lebanese markets so as to avoid flooding Lebanon with crop surpluses which might very well result in export restrictions.

The AMO seeks to protect traditional markets and open new ones abroad, he said.

He maintained that Jordanian exports have recently declined, due to a reported failure on the part of Jordanian producers to produce high quality well-packaged products capable of foreign competition.

He affirmed that at present between 1,500 and 2,000 tonnes of agricultural products are exported daily to Lebanese markets.

WHAT'S GOING ON CHRISTMAS EVE

* Christmas eve Eucharist at the Church of the Holy Redeemer at 11:00 p.m. (Tel. 813759).

EXHIBITIONS

- * Products of the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation at the Movenpick Hotel and resort, Petra, until Jan. 10.
- * "Special show and sale of Christmas crafts at the Jordan Crafts Centre (Alaydi), Jabal Amman, Second Circle (Tel. 644555), until Dec. 31.
- * Christmas special at the Jordan River Designs showroom (hand-made ornaments and decoration), Jabal Amman, First Circle (Tel. 613081/2), until Dec. 31.
- * Works by Spanish painter Clara Amado at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman until 15 Jan.
- * Exhibition of colourful gifts and crafts designed by Andrea Atalla at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of Noor Al Hussein Foundation, Wadi Saqra Street (Tel. 699141/2), until Jan. 10.
- * Works by several artists entitled "The Artist and the Environment" by several artists at Alia Art Gallery, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 30.
- * Works of small paintings by Jordanian and Arab artists at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens St. (Tel. 687598), until Jan. 14.
- * Water colour works by Jabbar Mijbil entitled "Declared Hunches" at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until Dec. 25.
- * Works by ten contemporary Indonesian artists entitled "From Scripts to Abstraction" at the Jordan National Gallery of Fine Arts (open daily except Tuesdays), until Jan. 12.
- * Painting exhibition by Hind Nasser at the Jordan Arts and Crafts Centre/Artsana, Jabal Amman (Tel. 647858), until Jan. 10. Also displaying a regular exhibition of arts and crafts and Christmas items.
- * Display of Christmas gift items at the Bani Hamida House, Jabal Amman (Tel. 658696/7) until Jan. 2.
- * Works by Rula Al Shuqairi at Darat Al Founn, Jabal Weibdeh, until Jan. 4. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.
- * Works on the life of André Marlaux at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh, until Dec. 24.
- * Graphics by computer exhibition by Ismail Shammout at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman, until Dec. 24.

CHRISTMAS EVE MASS

WILL BE CELEBRATED AT THE MEMORIAL OF MOSES ON MOUNT NEBO ON TUESDAY 24TH DECEMBER 1996 AT 8:00 P.M. ALL ARE WELCOME

Radio Shack

Authorized Distributor 685657

30% Discount on all toys

What do kids really want for Christmas?

Main Branch Gardens St. (Soon) Sweiffeh Branch

Toys Shop Alahlia-Abela

Zairean army launches counter-attack — rebels

GOMA, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean government troops have launched a counter-offensive against mainly Tutsi rebels who have seized key towns and a large swathe of the east of the country, the rebel leader said Monday.

Laurent-Desire Kabila, head of the rebel alliance, said the government troops had begun their counter-attack Saturday in the Bunia region, close to the Ugandan border.

"There are increased numbers of (regular) troops in Bunia and offensives from Bunia towards Beni (further south). It is a counter-offensive. The attacks began the day before yesterday. We are continuing to resist."

Mr. Kabila continued, appearing relaxed and smiling. The town of Beni, which fell to rebels at the beginning of December, is some 200 kilometres north of Goma, capital of North Kivu province, which is in rebel hands.

Kinshasa authorities must "cease the military adventure. They must come to the negotiating table. We do not agree with violence. We are pacifists," Mr. Kabila said in an interview at the luxurious villa of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko in Goma.

"We are warning Mobutu and his army against the nonsensical use of violence. Our riposte will be disproportionate. We are here and we are ready for them. It will be a pleasure to welcome them," he threatened.

Mr. Kabila further accused the French government of assisting Mr. Mobutu's counter-attack, saying: "Of course Mobutu receives military help from France."

He also claimed that foreign mercenaries were based in Kisangani, 500 kilometres west of Goma and Kindu, west of Bukavu, which are the two vanguard points of the Zairean army's military riposte.

"Some columns are heading towards the north. But it is not the mercenaries who will win this battle," he said.

Mr. Mobutu, Zaire's leader for more than three decades, returned to Kinshasa last Tuesday after four months in Switzerland and France for prostate cancer surgery and convalescence.

He promptly reorganised the military, naming a new chief of staff, and giving Zaire's political leaders a deadline of Monday to come up with a "crisis government."

On Saturday, Mr. Kabila told a radio broadcast the very idea of a Zairean army offensive was "the product of the most simplistic imagination."

Ugandan army reportedly kills 500 rebels on Zairean border

KAMPALA (AFP) — Ugandan government troops have killed some 500 rebels and captured 80 others in heavy fighting in the mountainous western Kasese district near the Zairean border, military sources said.

Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Muhesi told Monday's New Vision newspaper that the army had also encircled remaining rebel forces, whom he put at more than 700 men. He said he believed the war would soon be over.

About 5,000 troops, supported by heavy artillery, have been shelling rebel hideouts in the Ruwenzori Mountains straddling the Ugandan-Zairean border since Dec. 16, according to the state-owned New Vision.

An army lieutenant was also killed and 11 other government soldiers were wounded, according to reports.

The paper said the rebels have set up camps in the mountains, about 600 kilometres west of the Ugandan capital, after withdrawing from rear bases in Zaire, which were overrun by Zairean mainly Tutsi rebels.

The Kinshasa government accuses Uganda of supporting the Zairean rebels, known as the Banyamulenge. They are fighting to oust President Mobutu Sese Seko, who returned to the country last week after a four-month stay in Europe for cancer surgery and convalescence.

The Ugandan army claims that it has surrounded a rebel force of around 800 men, said to have entered Uganda from Zaire a month ago.

Meanwhile, Uganda's Roman Catholic Primate, Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala, has again urged the Kampala government to embark on peaceful means to end the spreading insurgency in the country.

In a signed Christmas message released here Monday, Cardinal Wamala said: "The plight of many brothers and sisters in Uganda is a matter of concern to us. The spilling over into our country of the disturbances and wars in neighbouring countries should not be allowed to continue."

Card. Wamala appealed to Ugandan leaders to find a peaceful means of improving relations in the region, an indirect reference to Uganda's ties with neighbouring countries which accuse it of fomenting rebellions.

Uganda accuses Zaire of supporting the Ugandan

Allied Democratic Front (ADF) rebels, a combination of the fundamentalist Tabliq Muslims and remnants of the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), which first invaded Uganda from Zaire on Nov. 16.

Uganda also accuses Sudan of training and arming rebels of another group, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), led by former Roman Catholic catechist Joseph Kony.

The LRA has been battling government troops in northern Uganda for the past 10 years to overthrow President Yoweri Museveni's regime and to replace it with a government based on the Biblical Ten Commandments.

Uganda also charges that Sudan supports another rebel group, the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF), led by Juma Oris, a former foreign minister in the ousted dictator Idi Amin's regime, which operates in northwest Uganda, accusations which Sudan has denied.

Khartoum in turn claims that Kampala backs John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), which has been fighting Khartoum for the past 10 years to end domination of the mainly Christian and animist southern Sudan by the Arabised, Muslim north.

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UNHCR: Over 300,000 Rwandans return from Tanzania

NAIROBI (AFP) — Almost 50,000 Rwandan Hutus returned from Tanzania over the weekend, bringing the total number of refugees to go home in the past 10 days to more than 300,000, the United Nations said Monday.

By mid-morning Monday, a stream of 15,000 former refugees had crossed the Rusumo River, Bridge between the neighbouring countries, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) office in Nairobi reported.

On Saturday, 30,354 Hutus went home to the small central African nation, dominated since 1994 by the Tutsi minority following a successful rebel insurgency by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). But the number of returnees fell Sunday to 19,471, largely because of heavy rains in north-western Tanzania's Ngara region, where the roads refugees are using lead to the border.

U.N. aid workers last week said that all the refugees in Tanzania, who began a mass exodus after Tanzanian authorities ordered the closure of their camps, could be home by around Christmas, as hundreds of thousands more joined the long trek from exile.

Anne-Willem Bijleveld of the UNHCR then said the repatriation of the more than 500,000 Hutus in Tanzania would be almost over by Monday.

The refugees fled to Tanzania after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, when Hutu extremist militias and then government troops slaughtered more than half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus before the RPF seized power in Kigali.

In Paris last week, Human Rights Watch/Africa called on Dar Es Salaam "immediately to halt the use of force" in urging the refugees to return and to drop an "arbitrary deadline" of Dec. 31 for all displaced persons to have left the country.

Tanzania has agreed, however, to maintain camps for about 200,000 Hutu refugees from Burundi, south of Rwanda, which is gripped by its own civil war between the Tutsi-dominated army and Hutu rebels.

The mass exodus of refugees from Tanzania follows the return of more than 600,000 others from eastern Zaire after mainly Tutsi Zairean rebels launched an uprising in October.

Hong Kong governor refuses to help China-backed legislature

HONG KONG (R) — Hong Kong's colonial Governor Chris Patten Monday refused a request by future leader Tung Chee-hwa to support the interim legislature China will install in the territory when the British depart next year.

Shipping magnate Tung, emerging from his first meeting with Mr. Patten since being chosen on Dec. 11 by a China-controlled committee to head Hong Kong from next July 1, told reporters that Mr. Patten flatly refused to provide any help to the new legislature in the run-up to the transfer of sovereignty to China.

"I brought up the work of the Provisional Legislature. I hope Mr. Patten and the Hong Kong government can give help," Mr. Tung told reporters outside Government House, Mr. Patten's residence.

"But Mr. Patten's position was very clear. I didn't successfully convince him," Mr. Tung said.

Both men emerged from a 1-1/2 hour meeting to exchange hearty handshakes and make brief speeches to the press, but mentioned little else of what transpired behind closed doors.

Describing the discussion as "long and constructive," both said they agreed to meet in the future when the need arose.

Mr. Patten, looking serious next to Mr. Tung, man-

aged the occasional smile for photographers but turned to lead Mr. Tung into a waiting car immediately after his successor completed his short speech.

Neither of them took questions. Monday's meeting was conducted under a cloud of strained Sino-British relations after China snubbed British objections and went ahead last Saturday with naming the provisional legislature that will replace the current elected Legislative Council (Legco) when Hong Kong returns to Chinese control 190 days from now.

The interim assembly was designed by China to reverse electoral reforms that Mr. Patten introduced unilaterally in recent years.

The move came under an international spotlight after British Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind Friday challenged China to let the World Court rule on the legality of the new assembly.

Mr. Patten also lashed out at the new lawmaking body Saturday, calling its appointment by a 400-member Selection Committee "a bizarre farce" and a "stomach-churning process."

"What it shows about China is that, here it is taking over responsibility for a first world economy but they're trying to foist on U.S. political institutions

which a third world country would reject," Mr. Patten had said.

"Here we are having foisted on U.S. institutions which, frankly, you wouldn't try to run a tennis club with," he said.

China, however, has warned Britain against creating problems and to keep out of Hong Kong's affairs after the handover.

"After 1997, Hong Kong will be an internal affair of China. No foreign countries can interfere with China's internal affairs," China's envoy in Hong Kong, Zhou Nan, told reporters.

"Whether Britain wants to accept my advice is up to it. But if it wants to create more new trouble, I don't think it will be out of the ordinary," he said Monday at a public function.

The controversial new body is dominated by pro-Beijing figures, including 33 incumbent lawmakers and many politicians who lost to pro-democracy candidates in the 1995 Legco election.

The Democratic Party, the biggest single winner in last year's election with 19 of the 60 Legco seats, boycotted the creation of the provisional body, branding it undemocratic.

The Provisional Legislative Council, as it will be known, is to sit from July 1 until a new legislature can be created via elections.

Seoul opposition barricades parliament

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korean opposition legislators formed a human barricade in parliament Monday to block the passage of a controversial government bill aimed at bolstering the power of intelligence agents.

Opposition legislators, divided into groups, locked the speaker in his office and kept a tight watch on the movement of ruling party members who are trying to reopen the year's last parliamentary session, witnesses said.

The blockade in parliament came after the ruling New Korea Party rejected an opposition demand to scrap the bill aimed at strengthening the investigative power of the Agency for National Security Planning (NSP).

Ruling party legislators, who maintain a slim majority, called for dialogue after their entry into the main

conference hall was denied. The stalemate started last week when the opposition blocked the bill's passage, contending it is designed to "intimidate students and activists and gag the news media" ahead of next year's presidential election.

The security agency, formerly known as the Korean CIA whose main job is to counter North Korean espionage efforts, had been used as a tool to stifle dissent by South Korea's past military-backed authoritarian regimes.

President Kim Young-Sam, a former dissident, reduced the agency's power drastically when he took office in early 1993.

But Mr. Kim ordered his cabinet to strengthen the nation's anti-espionage network following the incursion by a North Korean submarine with 26 infiltrators aboard in September.

The ruling party has defended the bill as necessary to cope with heightened tension between the two Koreas, which are technically still at war.

On Monday, college professors, dissidents and civil rights activists joined opposition parties and demanded the government drop the bill.

"We will organise protests if the ruling party railroad the bill through parliament," a group of 545 college professors declared in a joint statement, accusing the bill of lacking a national consensus.

In a separate statement, an alliance of 207 dissidents, religious and civil rights activists condemned the bill as an "anti-democratic step turning the clock back on history."

"The proposed amendment is designed to return to the cloak-and-dagger politics that military dictatorships employed in the past," they said.

Two-way trade was a modest \$6.38 billion in the first nine months of this year, only a small portion of China's nearly \$200 billion worth of trade over the same period.

The two nations are still haggling over big-ticket items from nuclear power plants to a natural gas pipeline, and Mr. Li's visit may not yield a breakthrough, analysts said.

But both sides are hoping to see enough progress to seal a deal when Chinese President Jiang Zemin meets Russian counterpart Yeltsin in Moscow next spring.

Russian officials in Beijing said there was still a wide gap between the two sides on a previously agreed-on plan for China to buy Russian nuclear technology.

Beijing wants the multi-billion dollar deal to use as little cash as possible while Moscow, badly in need of hard currency, is pushing for a more generous payment.

China has said it would switch the site of a nuclear plant using Russian technology in a move that is expected to make the project more commercially viable and ease some of the financial concerns, analysts said.

Russia is looking to make headway on a plan to build a pipeline to carry Siberian natural gas to China while it is also seeking a role in this country's huge Three Gorges Dam project.

Officials and analysts said the visit also will have a political theme.

While the two sides need to foster their relations with the West they must also demonstrate some independence to strengthen their hand domestically and on the international stage.

The Russian government has come under pressure from its Communist and nationalist opposition alike to abandon what is seen as a pro-Western stance and renew its ties with the former ally of the Communist era.

Plans for the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to include some ex-Communist states of Eastern Europe have also added new pressure for Moscow's leadership.

"Russia's foreign policy can no longer be pro-Western or pro-Eastern," a senior Russian Foreign Ministry official told Reuters in Moscow. "In the ideal world it should have trump cards to counterbalance any outside pressure."

S. Korea's 'trial of century' heads to Supreme Court

SEOUL (R) — South Korea's "trial of the century" headed to the Supreme Court Monday after prosecutors challenged sentences against former Presidents Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo as too lenient.

Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh decided they would not seek to overturn verdicts imposed by an Appeals Court on charges of mutiny, treason and corruption.

The Appeals Court last Monday commuted Mr. Chun's death sentence to life in jail and slashed Mr. Roh's prison term to 17 years from 22-1/2 years.

"We won't appeal. President Roh doesn't want to cause any more worries to the public over this incident," said Mr. Roh's lawyer Han Young-Suk.

Mr. Chun's lawyer, Lee Yang-Woo, said: "President Chun doesn't want to disgrace the country with the troubles of history when it faces difficulties at home and abroad. It won't help the country's interests to continue the trial."

But prosecutors said they would pursue the disgraced one-time heads of state to the highest appeals court in the country along with 13 others, including former presidential aides, ex-generals and businessmen.

"Even though Chun and

Roh decided not to appeal, we have no reason to follow their decision," Senior Prosecutor Kim Sang-Hee said.

"We began the trial with clear demands for punishment and have not wavered from start to finish," Mr. Kim said.

Prosecutors have all along sought death for Mr. Chun and life in jail for Mr. Roh.

Their decision helps ensure that a trial that has exposed the darkest secrets of South Korea's brutal past will drag on for several more months.

The convictions of Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh relate to a 1979 coup, an army massacre that crushed democratic resistance in 1980 in the city of Kwangju and illegal slush funds they amassed worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

Monday was the deadline to challenge the Appeal's Court rulings in the Supreme Court.

Mr. Roh's lawyer said the only reason Mr. Roh made an initial appeal was because Mr. Chun wanted to overturn his death sentence.

Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh are lifelong friends, and at their trial comforted each other by briefly squeezing hands as they stood side-by-side in the dock.

Mr. Chun was president from 1980-88 and Mr.

Roh succeeded him until 1993, when current President Kim Young-Sam took office.

Cases involving a total of 24 people, including Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh, will be reviewed by the Supreme Court after appeals either by themselves or prosecutors.

Prosecutors are challenging acquittals of two businessmen. Hanbo Group chairman Chung Tai-Soo and Lee Kyung-Hoon, former president of Daewoo Corp.

Daewoo Group Chairman Kim Woo-Chong and Dong Ah Group Chairman Choi Won-Suk have appealed against suspended prison terms imposed by the Appeals Court. Their original sentences called for actual jail time.

No appeals were filed against Jinro Group Chairman Chang Jin-Ho's suspended jail term.

The Supreme Court will review cases involving 14 former generals who stood trial with Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh on mutiny and sedition charges. One was acquitted.

Rounding out the appeals, cases against four former presidential aides, including Mr. Roh's chief bodyguard, will also be challenged.

Belgian police hit snag in mine search for children

BRUSSELS (R) — Belgian police have hit a snag in their search for a possible secret cell in a disused mine complex where convicted child rapist Marc Dutroux might have held victims.

Acting on statements by Mr. Dutroux and his second wife Michelle Martin, police have been searching the complex in the suburb of Jumet in the southwestern town of Charleroi since Dec. 13.

But they hit problems when a stairway they believed would lead straight to the central tunnel of the complex at a depth of 24 metres proved inaccessible because of rubble and concrete.

"The stairway which leads to the gallery is inaccessible," Gendarmerie spokesman Guy Soumy told reporters.

He did not rule out police trying again at a later stage to work their way through the

rubble. He said that on the basis of indications from former miners, police were now mainly pinning their hopes on a newly-found flooded cellar.

"The cellar is the most important we found today but because of the darkness we cannot do anything about it now," Mr. Soumy said.

He said water had first to be pumped out of the cellar and additional equipment brought in.

"We now have to see whether there is a passage from the cellar (to the tunnel complex)," Mr. Soumy said.

Commander Johan Dewinne, who heads the body identification team of the Gendarmerie, said an air current from the cellar indicated that there was another entrance to the tunnels.

Chinese premier's Russia visit to pave way for summit

BEIJING (R) — China's Premier Li Peng leaves for Moscow this week on a trip aimed at boosting economic links and paving the way for a presidential summit next year.

While politics will take a back seat on Mr. Li's visit, both China and Russia stand to gain in a delicate balancing act of their political ties with the West, analysts said Monday.

"Trade will be the main item on the agenda," said Lu Nanquan, deputy chief director of the Russian Studies Centre of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a top think tank.

"Both sides need to see an improvement in economic ties," he said.

Mr. Li, who starts his three-day visit Thursday, could become the first foreign leader to meet Mr. Yeltsin since the Russian president's return to work Monday from heart surgery.

Mr. Yeltsin's press office said a meeting was possible given the huge importance Moscow gives to improving ties with China.

Officials of both sides have said that economic ties have failed to keep pace with the rapid improvement in political links between the former rivals for the leadership of the world Communist movement.

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World News

Britain condemns suspected loyalist bomb attack

BELFAST (R) — Britain Monday condemned a suspected Protestant guerrilla attack that sent the Northern Ireland peace process into crisis but refused to say if it would mean expulsion of loyalist parties from peace talks.

Pro-British loyalists, who have observed a two-year truce in their fight against Catholic Irish nationalists, were widely blamed for Sunday's hood-trap bomb that wounded a well-known Irish Republican. So far no group has admitted the attack.

"Whoever did this did a disgraceful and disgusting act and one which has to be unequivocally condemned," Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew told BBC Radio.

Sir Patrick declined specifically to blame loyalists, but he indicated suspicion centred on the extremists who killed hundreds of minority Catholics during a 25-year war to preserve British rule in the province.

"Whoever it is has to be condemned. There is no way by which violence can play a part in the affairs of our democracy," Sir Patrick said he did want to anticipate whether the car bomb represented the ending of the loyalist truce, which politicians say would almost certainly result in their political affiliates being expelled from current, multiparty peace talks.

"We have a procedure which enables the continuance of a party to be raised in the talks, and it is then for the (British and Irish Republic) governments to decide whether or not they have flagrantly breached the principles of democracy and non-

violence," Sir Patrick said. "It would be a classic act of folly, apart from wickedness, if they (the loyalists) went back to violence because they have brought upon their political parties great influence and kudos through their continued ceasefire."

The attack which injured Eddie Copeland, a 25-year-old Irish Republican, was widely seen as a reprisal for an attack by Irish Republican Army (IRA) gunmen in a children's hospital Friday.

The IRA, fighting to oust Britain from Northern Ireland, wounded a policeman acting as a bodyguard for a prominent Protestant politician who was visiting his seven-year-old son.

Political sources in Belfast said the loyalist guerrillas, who called their truce in October 1994 in response to an IRA ceasefire, might have intended the attack as a one-off and might avoid any admission of responsibility which could lead to their political allies losing their seats in the peace talks.

The IRA ended its ceasefire last February with bombs in mainland Britain and its Sinn Féin political wing has been refused a place at the peace talks.

"I would hope that both sides will show restraint in the coming days. I certainly hope people will listen," commented Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring.

"The one thing we do not want to do is to get back to the tit-for-tat killings that we had in Northern Ireland down through the years."

Kremlin ahead in Sunday regional polls

MOSCOW (R) — Regional governors backed by President Boris Yeltsin took a narrow lead in local elections Sunday and the brother of maverick politician Alexander Lebed won the poll in a district of western Siberia.

But Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov invigorated Monday that the results were "a complete success" for the opposition. The results, published by Russian news agencies Monday, showed that Kremlin appointees took the governorships in six of the 15 regions holding such polls. Two other Kremlin appointees will be favourites in second round votes.

Candidates from the Communist-led Union of National and Patriotic Forces, which groups Communists and other opposition forces won in four regions and were strong in two where run-off votes were due.

The Kremlin and the opposition have each claimed success in previous regional elections, which select local governors who then sit on the Federation Council upper house of parliament.

Mr. Zyuganov told a news conference that the opposition would be able to expand its national power base as a result of its gains in recent weeks. The opposition, which already dominates the State Duma lower house, has said it is close to winning control over the Federation Council.

But the Kremlin says most of the newly elected governors are either government supporters or, at the least, are not hardline opponents. Presidential Chief of Staff Anatoly Chubais has said he wants a pragmatic, apolitical cooperation with the regions.

Several Communist-backed new governors have appeared on platforms with officials from Mr. Chubais's Kremlin administration, pledging their willingness to work with the government.

One independent candidate was elected in Khakassia in western Siberia, where voters chose independent Alexei Lebed, the brother of former Security Council Secretary Alexander Lebed, in a run-off. Kremlin officials said earlier this month that Alexei Lebed had a "constructive position."

Mr. Yeltsin sacked Alexander Lebed in October, accusing him of harbouring presidential ambitions and splitting the Kremlin team.

In the vast but thinly populated diamond-rich Republic of Yakutia, reformist incumbent President Mikhail Nikolayev was reelected in a runoff vote.

Governors directly appointed by Mr. Yeltsin won in the Arctic Arkhangelsk region, in Chukotka across the Bering Strait from Alaska, in Taimyr in Siberia, Perm in the Urals and the Volga region Ulyanovsk.

Opposition candidates won in central Russia's Kostroma and Ryazan regions, in Chelyabinsk in the Urals, and in the fertile agricultural region of Krasnodar in southern Russia.

A total of 55 regional polls have been held so far and 41 governors have been elected.

Burundi rebels declare Christmas truce

NAIROBI (AFP) — Hutu rebels fighting Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army Monday declared a Christmas and New Year truce to run from midnight that day for 11 days.

The unilateral truce was announced by the main Hutu rebel movement, the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD), in a statement released in the Kenyan capital Nairobi.

It is the first time the CNDD has officially called a Christmas ceasefire.

However, a leader of the movement told AFP "we enforced a truce on the ground last year without announcing it."

The CNDD declared "a general truce of 11 days from midnight Monday Dec. 23, 1996, until midnight Friday, Jan. 3, 1997, to allow the Burundian people to celebrate Christmas and the New Year in gladness and peace," CNDD leader Leonard Nyangoma wrote.

Primakov: NATO enlargement is 'dangerous' for Russia

TEHRAN (AFP) — Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov warned here Monday that the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was "dangerous" for his country.

"The possible expansion of NATO risks dividing Europe and Russia by no means likes this prospect," Mr. Primakov told a press conference before winding up his two-day visit here.

"It is a dangerous phenomenon for Russia." The issue of NATO enlargement was also raised earlier in a meeting between Mr. Primakov and Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri.

Mr. Nategh Nuri praised Russia for opposing NATO enlargement, saying it would prevent U.S. "mischievous" in the region.

"We appreciate Russia's firm stand against the expansion of NATO as it prevents the United States from acting mischievously in central Asia," the speaker reportedly told Mr. Primakov.

The foreign ministers of NATO countries decided this month to hold a summit

in July to decide on new members. The Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are widely viewed as the frontrunners for early admission to NATO.

But Russia refused last week to participate in an exchange of liaison officers with NATO and warned that enlargement could spark a return to the cold war.

Iran is at political odds with the United States and tries to contain Washington's influence in the region. Washington for its part accuses Tehran of sponsoring world terrorism and seeks to isolate it.

But Mr. Primakov said his country was opposed to isolating a "big and important country as Iran" and condemned the United States for "its recent acts of provoking tension in the region."

The Washington Post reported Sunday that U.S. officials were mulling possible responses — political, economic or military — if investigations prove beyond doubt that Iran was behind the bombing of a U.S. military barracks in Saudi Arabia in June in which 19 U.S. servicemen died.

Yeltsin returns to Kremlin 'ready for battle'

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin returned to the Kremlin Monday declaring that he was "ready for battle" after nearly six months' absence through illness and major heart surgery.

Mr. Yeltsin, wearing a heavy black winter coat and fur hat, arrived at his official residence in the Kremlin in a Mercedes at 9:40 a.m. (0640 GMT) and told waiting reporters: "I'm ready for battle."

"I'm in a good mood and feel good," Mr. Yeltsin said, after being greeted by a commander of the Kremlin Guards.

"Of course, my first task is to tackle salaries, pensions, the armed forces and a number of other issues," Mr. Yeltsin added.

Mr. Yeltsin, 65, has convalesced in hospital and various rest homes and coun-

try dachas since his quintuple heart bypass operation on Nov. 5.

He last put in an appearance at the Kremlin on Aug. 22, but left a few days later on holiday.

Earlier this month, Russia was swept by a nationwide coalminers' strike and millions of others workers have also demanded urgent payment of wages which have been delayed for months.

Asked by journalists Monday whether 1997 would be a better year for Russians, Mr. Yeltsin replied: "Without any doubt."

Mr. Yeltsin has been largely absent from public affairs since suffering a heart attack on the eve of his reelection to the presidency on July 3, which gave him a new four-year mandate, until 2000.

Kremlin spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said

Mr. Yeltsin planned to meet his Chief of Staff Anatoly Chubais and several other top aides Monday. Mr. Yeltsin will meet Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin Tuesday, he added.

Mr. Yeltsin pledged in a television address Friday to be an active and energetic president, and warned top officials that he would not countenance any slack work.

On the eve of Mr. Yeltsin's return, maverick retired General Alexander Lebed, sacked by Mr. Yeltsin as national security advisor in October amid a Kremlin power struggle, said he considered the Russian leader to be too sick to run the country.

Gen. Lebed also said Mr. Yeltsin had begun drinking liquor again. Asked in a BBC interview how much work Mr. Yeltsin could undertake, pioneering U.S. heart surgeon Michael

DeBakey, who acted as consultant to Mr. Yeltsin's surgeons, said: "A reasonable workload, maybe eight hours a day, is all right."

Dr. DeBakey said Mr. Yeltsin should continue to be "monitored for another month or six weeks."

He also warned that the Russian leader should keep any consumption of alcohol "on a moderate level," and warned against "the custom of toasting throughout the meal" during Russian new year celebrations.

During Mr. Yeltsin's absence, speculation has been rife that Mr. Chubais has been increasing his powers, and that Mr. Yeltsin's youngest daughter Tatyana Dyachenko has been playing a key political role in briefing her father on affairs of state.

Both figures advised Mr. Yeltsin during his reelection campaign.

Pro-government rally set for Belgrade today

BELGRADE (AFP) — The Serbian authorities are marshalling their support after more than a month of opposition demonstrations, calling a rally of their own in Belgrade Tuesday, the official Tanjug News Agency said Monday.

The rally is due to be held at the same time as the daily opposition demonstration, and an opposition spokesman expressed fears that there could be confrontation. Up to 200,000 opposition supporters have been protesting daily over the authorities' refusal to recognise the results of Nov. 17 local elections, in which the opposition Together Coalition won control of 15 out of 18 main

towns and cities, including Belgrade.

Demonstrations in support of the authorities began in the provinces last week in response.

Tanjug News Agency said that a pro-government rally would take place Tuesday in the centre of the city, according to the organisers.

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Proper way to act

THE PRONOUNCEMENTS made Sunday by deputies at the Lower House of Parliament, about the Kingdom's ties with Israel reflect the general mood of the people who are becoming increasingly frustrated by the policies of the new Israeli government. Two years after the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty, support for the peace treaty is declining, not increasing as had initially been the case.

That is not surprising. In fact, it is a natural outcome of the course the peace process has taken.

When the peace treaty was signed, Jordanians hoped for a new peaceful era in which countries of the region would work together for the betterment of their people's life. The peace treaty was thought of as a link in a chain which would eventually bring comprehensive peace to the Middle East and end the suffering that Israel is causing to the Palestinians and Lebanese people. But that did not happen. On the contrary, the only thing Israel has been doing since the formation of its Likud-led government this summer is give people more reason to doubt its willingness to live in peace with its neighbours.

Israel has reneged on its promises, confiscated more Palestinian land and is pursuing an expansionist policy that is threatening the whole peace process. Israel is killing the hope for peace.

Not many should thus be surprised when they hear deputies calling for a halt of the normalisation process with Israel. Jordanians, however, need to realise that abrogating the peace treaty and severing diplomatic relations with Israel is not necessarily the best way to react to Israel's irresponsible and provocative policies. As far as Jordan is concerned, peace is a strategic option that can only be realised and enhanced by positive engagement with the Israeli people and government. True, the Israeli government could be pressured into changing its antagonistic positions through a variety of measures that could also include popular campaigning against further normalisation and against doing business with Israelis. While the government cannot go back on the peace treaty, nothing can stop the people from taking action on the popular level that would signal to Israel Jordanians' unwillingness to deal with Israel unless it recognises the rights of all Arabs, honours its commitments and does what it takes to achieve the comprehensive peace that Jordanians seek and their country have made numerous sacrifices for.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily called for an international conference, to be attended by Arab states and major world powers, to examine the situation in the occupied Arab territories in light of Israel's intransigent position with regard to peace. Sultan Hatab said that since its assumption of power in Israel, the rightist political bloc led by the Likud Party has been acting in a manner that could only ruin the peace process, has been pursuing efforts for building settlements on confiscated Arab lands and has taken repressive measures against the Palestinians. The world is witnessing the unacceptable behaviour of the Likud-led government and its drive to ruin any chance for peaceful coexistence in the Middle East region, something that should motivate the Arab leaders to call for such an international conference to study ways of addressing the situation before it is too late and before tension is escalated, leading to open conflict between Israel and the Arab countries, continued the writer. He said that Egypt can lead the way in such an endeavour and urge the world powers to convene such a conference where the Israeli actions can be further exposed and pressure can be exerted on its government to comply with the requirements of peace.

AL DUSTOUR daily saw in the resumption of U.S. envoy Dennis Ross' mission in the Middle East a total failure, saying there is no point in such a mission as long as Israel holds all the cards in the Middle East peace process. The shuttle diplomacy and the mediation efforts of Mr. Ross are futile and the talks he is holding with the Palestinian and Israeli leaders will not yield any fruit, said the paper, noting that the Israeli intransigence is delaying the arrival at a final settlement. The paper cited a statement by former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, before Mr. Ross embarked on his mission, in which he said that it is the Palestinians who are delaying a settlement and that they should offer concessions to Israel so that peace can be achieved. This statement, said the paper, reflects the official American position which is entirely biased against the Palestinians: in light of this bias, one can expect nothing from American mediation and Mr. Ross' mission. The paper expressed apprehension that in his second mandate as president, Bill Clinton will display further tendency towards supporting the Jewish state and will exert pressure on the Palestinians to make them succumb to Israel's desires.

The View from Fourth Circle

Slam dunking through history, Asia, Islamdom and Harvard Square

By Rami G. Khouri

IN A recent article in the April 1996 issue of the Journal of Democracy entitled "Democracy for the Long Haul", respected American scholar and Harvard Professor Samuel P. Huntington makes important observations about "third wave" democracies — those states in Latin America, Europe and the developing south that have adopted democratic systems in recent decades. The article is pertinent to the Middle East because so many states in this region are experimenting with governance systems with various forms of participation, pluralism and accountability — the three elements, in my mind, that are necessary for democratic, effective governance, whether we call it democracy, shura, liberalism, modernism, constitutionalism or anything else.

The intellectual depth and relevance of Professor Huntington's analyses are as powerful as ever; but they are also still matched occasionally by his peculiarly American combination of ignorance and arrogance in dealing with the rest of the world.

Professor Huntington says that newly democratising societies face three common difficulties: a) elections often cause politicians to appeal to ethnic, tribal and religious constituencies, and thus can promote communalism and ethnic conflicts; b) democratisation can promote aggression and foreign wars; c) democratisation often questions authority in general and promotes an amoral, laissez-faire or "anything goes" atmosphere, leading to increased drug use, crime and perhaps disintegration of family and other forms of collective authority.

Huntington then goes on to say that third wave democracies face several common internal dangers: a) the "red return" (the return to power of former communists and other autocrats), b) the assumption of power through democratic means of groups or parties committed to anti-democratic ideologies (he mentions Islamists in Algeria and Turkey as possible examples), c) executive arrogation, "which occurs when an elected chief executive concentrates power in his own hands, subordinates or even suspends the legislature, and rules largely by decree," (e.g. Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia and Peru), and d) the advent of partial democracy, whereby democratically elected governments abridge political and civil liberties, limit press freedom, harass opposition members and rebuff the claims of minorities.

These sound points are generally anchored in empirical fact and experience. His last point, however — that two alternatives to democracy have emerged in the post-communist world: Islamism and Asian authoritarianism — sees Huntington wander into the awkward landscape of confusion and nonsense. By juxtaposing democracy as a political governance system with the largely culture-based values of Islamism and Asianism, he reflects the tendency of triumphalist Americanism to hold itself up as an inevitable model for others to follow, and even as a universal validating concept to which all societies one day will have to submit themselves for assessment, approval or rejection. He concludes his essay by saying: "In some circumstances, authoritarianism may do well in the short term, but experience clearly shows that only democracy produces good government over the long haul."

Oh, really? Which, and whose, experience? The United States, parts of Europe and other happy lands since the late 18th century? Certainly, democracy and capitalism have combined in these lands to generate one of human history's most extraordinary bursts of urbanism, technological energy, stability and rising living standards for the majority of one's population — though these achievements were heavily fuelled — juiced, they might say in Cambridge — by the problematic parallel Western phenomena of colonialism, imperialism, racism and other forms of mass subjugation and — gulp — anti-democratic practices directed mainly against non-whites, non-Christians and non-Atlantic rim lands. The experience of the rest of the world is far richer and older than pan-Atlantic modernism, and should not be dismissed so quickly or axiomatically bundled in with authoritarianism if it does not hit home runs for democracy's and America's team.

"This region's people seem to value dignity more than democracy — as expressed in our newly emerging form of Oriental democracy in which collective Oriental cultural habits are much more meaningful and important than modern individualistic democratic rights and practices."

The idea that Western-style democracy is a model that we should learn from, absorb and eventually copy in its broad lines is the intellectual and cultural equivalent of missing a slam dunk in basketball by hitting the ball on the rim and watching it shoot out of bounds above the glittering hairbands of screaming yet embarrassed cheerleaders: Professor Huntington was hovering over his target and ready to finish with an impressive flourish, to the acclaim of all; but he faltered in the end for the same reason that basketball players occasionally miss their slam dunks — they lose their focus and concentration, they wander beyond their proven capabilities or expertise, and/or in the end, they aim to entertain more than to be purposeful or truthful in their professional endeavour.

The facts on the ground in the Middle East, and probably other parts of the south, suggest not that democracy and Islamism/authoritarianism are pitted against one another in a post-communist tug-of-war for universal adoption. They suggest, rather, that gradual transformation due to economic or political pressures is generating a new hybrid that I would call "Oriental democracy" — a synthesis of superficially adopted Western democratic norms (elections, political parties, a free and varied press, an independent judiciary, etc.) with the more credible and deeply

entrenched Oriental traditions of communally-configured patriarchal and oligarchic governance (based on values that are primarily cultural, rather than religious).

If we examine countries in this region that have experienced some form of liberalisation or even democratisation — say, Jordan, Egypt, Oman, Kuwait, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran, Morocco and Turkey — we notice the following common denominators: a) none of the modern, Western-style democratic institutions have resulted in any substantive, meaningful or lasting change in state ideologies or policies, b) power today, as two or three decades ago, remains primarily in the hands of prevailing oligarchies that combine the political, tribal, commercial and security elites with the important religious elite and the less important intellectual and cultural elites, and c) the vast majority of people in these countries appears satisfied with this situation.

The demand of most people in these ancient lands is not for democracy — much as this may disappoint democrats here and in Harvard. The majority demand is for the modern state to deliver the same sort of protection, respect and identity that have been provided for thousands of years by the premodern forms of governance and communal configuration. This region's people seem to value dignity more than democracy — as expressed in our newly emerging form of Oriental democracy in which collective Oriental cultural habits are much more meaningful and important than modern individualistic democratic rights and practices. The quest for dignity comprises an ancient indigenous combination of, among other things, personal rights, a sense of justice that allows people to have their views heard, reasonably good governance, fair access to the ruling elites, a sense of security, an ability to improve one's quality of life through personal initiative, the ability to change dishonest or poor quality leaders, and reasonable freedom to express one's cultural, ethnic, religious or tribal identity without threatening the identities of others in society.

Many of the processes and dangers that Professor Huntington describes about democratising societies can be seen in numerous Middle Eastern states. He has done our world a good deed in analysing many of these issues in such a neat, accurate and useful form; he has emphasised his few shortcomings, though, by repeatedly, and I believe wrongly, juxtaposing democracy with Islamism or Asianism, and by hopelessly mixing up governance systems, religious values and cultural norms. Democracy, Islamism and Asianism are not and should not be analysed as opposing or incompatible forces. The historical, cultural, moral and intellectual roots of many key Western democratic and capitalist concepts — individual rights, codified laws, contractual obligations — can be traced back for centuries and millennia in Arab, Islamic, Middle Eastern and Asian societies. Our challenge is not to drive these traditions further apart, but to bring them closer together. A deeper, more accurate, less imperial and less ideologically motivated appreciation of the Islamist and Asianist phenomena might suggest that these are not democracy's enemy, but in part its older spirit, and in part its estranged brother.

Cyprus — an unsolved problem that only breeds 'diplomatic tourism'

By G. H. Jansen

THE ADAGE "too many cooks spoil the broth" perfectly explains the present state of the Cyprus problem even though this is not a large or complicated problem involving large numbers of people; for the number of Greek Cypriots on the island is 600,000 and the number of Turkish Cypriots is 100,000, to which has to be added an estimated 70,000 mainland Turkish settlers brought in since 1974: 770,000 persons in all.

And yet there are no less than nine international peacemakers, all trying to solve this quite minuscule problem. These gentlemen come from the United Nations, the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Luxembourg, Finland, Sweden, the European Commission and France. A distinct oddity is the presence among these mediators of a South Korean (the U.N. envoy) dealing with this "complicated" dispute. And the rank of these envoys is rising.

Last summer, the U.S. sent its U.N. ambassador — now Secretary of State Madeleine Albright — to Nicosia and next week British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind is due to visit the island. (The South Korean is a former foreign minister and the Finn a former prime minister).

It is not even that Cyprus poses a difficult problem, involving delicate points of international law, because, in essence, it is quite simply a matter of invasion and occupation, accompanied by what is now called "ethnic cleansing" of Greek Cypriots from Turkish-controlled areas.

The basic reason why there is such a plethora of do-gooders is because the Western-dominated world community does not want to know the rights and wrongs of the problem and to act according to well-established principles of international law or impose a solution in conformity with U.N. resolutions on Cyprus.

On the ground, there is a

nominal-independent entity in the northern one-third of the island that calls itself "the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC) and which shares a capital, Nicosia, with the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus, in the south. The short and simple remedy, put forward in U.N. resolutions, is the removal to the mainland of the Turkish invaders and settlers.

Since no country except Turkey has recognised the "TRNC", which is shunned by the international community, the latter clearly knows were legitimacy lies but is also reluctant to upset the "TRNC's" parent body, mainland Turkey. It is this amoral ambiguity that produces the small tribe of mediators. And the world community cannot make up its mind whether or not it should continue to deal normally with Turkey.

There is a variety of reasons why the world community cannot make up its mind about Turkey. This leads the community to waver between Greece, Turkey's antagonist which supports the Cyprus Republic, and Turkey. And not only over Cyprus but over several other territorial issues that have brought the two countries close to war this year.

The West has taken no decision because the geographic situation, strategic advantages and historic behaviour of one side are balanced against those of the other. Turkey is, for instance, a much larger and militarily stronger country than Greece. So it has both territorial and strategic advantage. But Turkey has not been a reliable ally. Greece fought alongside the Western allies in both world wars. Turkey fought with Germany against the allies in World War I and remained stubbornly neutral in World War II, even after being offered and accepting the territorial bribe of Alexandretta, a Syrian territory, from the French.

Both countries joined the U.S./U.N. military effort in Korea, though the Turkish contribution was much larger than

that of Greece. Both countries are members of NATO, to which Turkey was admitted most reluctantly because Europe — that is Western Europe — has never considered Turkey truly "European" and still does not do so. During the cold war, Turkey was much more enthusiastically anti-Communist than was Greece and in general Turkey has been more pro-American, more subservient and less fractious than an upstart and independent-minded Greece.

Nevertheless, Turkey's population is seen by Europeans as a large mass of underdeveloped Muslims, racially and religiously alien to the Christian West of which Greece is, indubitably, not just a part but the root and source of the common Christian culture. Because of this cultural gap, Turkey can be a useful ally, but not a full member of the European family. The European Union, which Greece is, although Turkey has been granted generous economic concessions.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey's star seemed to be on the rise as there was a great deal of talk of Turkey serving as the European gateway to the Islamic and Turkic republics of Central Asia. This was always an unreal dream and has now, very largely, been quietly forgotten.

In spite of these factors and the balancing act performed by Europe between Turkey and Greece, the West is reluctant to tackle Turkey on Cyprus.

This reluctance, indeed, refusal, was displayed at the recent summit meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe which accepts Turkey as a member without enforcing the organisation's own prohibition against members occupying the territory of another country, as is the case, flagrantly, of Turkey in Cyprus.

That, indeed, has been the general attitude of Western Europe and the U.S. towards Turkey: that the Turks are not desirable friends and allies, particularly because of their

poor human rights record, but are valuable because of their considerable military strength and geographic situation. (Greece has never used the counterargument that if Turkey is valuable as a forward base against Russia and Islam, Greece is no less valuable as a rear base and bastion). Furthermore, the Europeans cannot but be flattered by the Turks' fervent wish to be

"Europeans," a wish planted in them by the Father of the Nation, Kemal Ataturk who despised and rejected the Asian roots and background of the Turkish people.

It is because "much might be said on both sides" in favour of, as well as against, Greece and Turkey that the Cyprus issue is deadlocked, suspended and unresolved. So mediator after mediator is brought in, every

one without result. Indeed, Greek Cypriots now say the real reason for the mediators' presence in Cyprus is the sunny, warm weather the island enjoys — "diplomatic tourism." Furthermore, a spell of duty here gives mediators from countries where English is not the mother tongue the chance to improve their spoken English which is the lingua franca of the island.

LETTERS

Jordan has industrial potential

To the Editor:

I AM WRITING in response to the column written by Dr. Fahed Faneh, "Services, which generate 75% of the jobs, should be supported" (Jordan Times, Dec. 22, 1996).

Dr. Faneh stated that since no positive results were noticed after 25 years of bias towards industry, it is now time to shift attention towards services. He goes on to state that industry is always "capital intensive" and does not hire more than 25 per cent of the manpower in the country.

As someone in charge of running one of Jordan's leading holding companies, under which we have established various industrial and service-oriented operations, mainly with U.S. and European investors, I was distressed by this article not only because of several ill-made judgements, but also because it came from one of Jordan's most valuable economists, Dr. Faneh. He is most influential within the circles of policy making, and is often consulted on these matters. I believe it is most important to study accurately his arguments.

Dr. Faneh states that a lot of attention and the lion's share of resources have been dedicated to industry for the past 25 years and that, after all, the results are not promising.

I believe that all industrialists in Jordan will agree that it was only in the last five years that the government's policy towards industry changed. In fact, before the last decade, it was even impossible to obtain a licence to set up an industry. It was very difficult to have foreign investors. There were no exemptions allocated to industry. There were taxes on exports.

The fantastic change in the last five years can be attributed to a distinctly more favourable attitude and policies that have tangible results that can be measured by the data available from the Investment Promotions Corporation.

Dr. Faneh's argument can thus be demonstrated to be fundamentally flawed. In fact, even this year, there have been tax cuts on raw materials, expansion of industrial zones, a "green lane" for customs and many other technical developments that demonstrate this current government's commitments to having results in more mainly export-oriented industrial projects.

According to Dr. Faneh, present industries employ less people, pro-rata as to percentage of GDP, than services. Unfortunately, he is judging future strategies rather than mentioning realities on the ground. Dr. Faneh's projections of the future should focus on the industries that have been set up in the five years and that demonstrate sound economic feasibility as well as a substantial contribution to Jordan, both economically and socially, and not on the obsolete industries based on import substitution. His views, when applied to old, defunct industries with old technology, bad management and only local market sales, could very well be right. But as we all know, the real chance for Jordan's future is export-based industry. The Cairo summit placed an emphasis on this, and most of our international consultants tell us, time and again, that we need to focus on export as it is Jordan's major competitive advantage. I, personally, am a proud exporter to Europe and the United States.

There is need to continue easing procedures for industry, to help us be more efficient, and to open up markets and sign free trade agreements. We must be confident that we can do it. We should not be afraid that our economy will be flooded. Our industry is strong, competitive and, if nurtured, will bring about Jordan's true potential.

Omar Salah,
 Amman.

OECD sees Asian 'dragons' spitting less fire

PARIS (AFP) — Economic activity is set to remain subdued in the short-term in the dynamic Asian economies (DAEs), faced with slow export growth and continued tight money policies to deter inflation, the OECD has said.

Growth in the DAEs — Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia — was likely to remain low by Asian standards this year and next at just over six per cent, down from seven per cent in 1995, it said.

But activity should pick up marginally to nearly 6.5 per cent in 1998, while inflation was likely to remain above 4.2 per cent on average because of growing labour costs reflecting infrastructure bottlenecks and shortages of skilled manpower.

In its half-yearly Economic Outlook, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) also cautioned that the risk of capital market volatility and exchange rate pressures "may not disappear rapidly" in the region.

It said that "the possibility of devaluations may arise, leading to further monetary and fiscal tightening" which could entail slower than projected growth.

The report stressed that the tightening of monetary policy in many DAEs at the end of 1995, following years of brisk activity at or above full capacity use, appeared to be producing the hoped for results, with slower growth entailing a mild easing of inflation pressures.

"This may indicate that the DAEs have shifted to a more sustainable pace of growth," the OECD said.

In the period immediately ahead, the report said, a likely easing of export expansion was likely to exert a negative impact on business spending plans in the region.

But it considered that continued strong spending on construction and infrastructure projects would partially offset a deceleration in industrial investment.

The DAEs were also

likely to benefit from gradually accelerating export growth next year, mainly as a result of rising demand from Japan and China.

But overall, they would increasingly have to rely on domestic demand to maintain growth of output through 1998, the OECD said.

It noted, however, that rising infrastructure spending and robust consumer demand would in part be met by imports, which were likely to continue growing strongly.

As a result of these trends, the aggregate current account deficit of the DAEs was projected to stabilise over the next two years at just under \$14 billion, about twice the 1995 level.

This reflected a sharp worsening of the five economies' overall trade balance, which saw their combined deficit widen from \$15 billion in 1995 to just over \$21 billion this year, and was projected to peak at \$26.8 billion next year before stabilising at about \$26.5 billion in 1998, according to the OECD.

While Chinese Taipei continues to run a solid surplus, it could be somewhat eroded, from \$12.9 billion this year to \$11 billion in 1998, OECD projections showed.

The brunt of the burden would be born by Hong Kong, with its deficit expected to rise from \$20.9 billion this year to \$24 billion by 1998, and Thailand, whose deficit could grow from \$13 billion to \$14 billion in 1997 before falling off to \$13.5 billion in 1998.

Singapore, which has faced a \$2.9 billion turnaround from a surplus last year to a \$2 billion deficit this year, could see a further widening to \$2.5 billion over the next two years, while Malaysia was likely to experience some increase in its surplus to \$2.5 billion.

The region's poor export performance this year — with shipments growing by less than 10 per cent in dollar value terms compared with 1995 growth rates of over 20 per cent — was partly due to a fall in world demand for electronic and information equip-

ment, the OECD said.

Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore were the hardest hit by this development, which was accompanied by a loss of competitiveness against Japanese exports due to the yen's depreciation.

Uncertainties concerning export prospects and pessimism among financial investors have increased as a result of short-term measures to stem the worsening of the region's current account positions.

This resulted in increased volatility in capital movements and exchange rates since the summer in several economies, especially Thailand and to some extent Malaysia, the OECD noted.

MEES: Iraq finalises 23 oil export contracts

NICOSTIA (AFP) — Iraq has finalised 23 oil export contracts for a total volume of 541,000 barrels a day (b/d), the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday.

The Nicostia-based weekly said 330,000 b/d of Kirkuk crude would be exported via Turkey and 211,000 b/d of Basra light from Iraq's Mina Al Bakr offshore terminal in the Gulf.

Eleven contracts cover a three-month period and another 11 a period of six months, while the U.S. firm Bayoil was awarded two contracts, for a single cargo, and a March 10-June 7 lifting, making an average 19,000 b/d over six months.

Three U.S.-registered companies — Coastal, Chevron and Mobil — have also signed contracts with Iraq, the authoritative newsletter said.

Five Russian companies have signed up for a total of \$7,000 b/d over six months while four British firms, including Shell and Texaco (U.K.), are to buy a total of 90,000 b/d over a period of three months.

For France, only Total and Elf-SOCAP have so far signed contracts, while the Turkish firm Tupras on its own has a deal to buy 60,000 b/d. Iraq has a single Japanese client, Mitsubishi, for 40,000 b/d over three months. "As might have been expected in view of its long history of oil trade with Iraq before August 1990 — one substantial U.S. refiner, Coastal Corp., was first off the mark in securing a large-volume contract of 60,000 b/d," said MEES.

Egypt says foreign investment interest has increased fourfold

CAIRO (R) — Foreigners won approval for direct investments in Egypt totalling 3,098 million pounds (\$910 million) in the first 11 months of 1996, four times more than in the same period of 1995, the government's Investment Promotion Agency has said.

Ibrahim Fawzi, head of the General Authority for Investment (GAFI), said the figure covered the direct investment applications which the authority approved during that period.

The projects can take several years to come to fruition and in some cases the investors drop their plans.

But Mr. Fawzi told a news conference the figures showed the level of interest in Egypt since a new government, led by

Prime Minister Kamal Ganzouri, took office in January with a mission to encourage the private sector and foreign investment.

"The rate of implementation (of investment applications) has been about 70 per cent and it is increasing," he added.

The figures do not include foreign portfolio investment through the Egyptian Stock Exchange, which added at least \$500 million to the inflow of foreign capital in 1996.

Mr. Fawzi said the increase in stock market activity over the past year had indirectly stimulated interest in direct investment. "Investors want to know they can get in and out quickly. When the stock market came to life, it was like a green light, a sign that Egypt was seri-

ous," he said.

He added that the private sector now accounted for 67 per cent of Egypt's gross domestic product and the proportion would increase with more privatisation of state companies and with private sector investment in infrastructure through BOT (build, operate, transfer) projects.

Twenty years ago the public sector dominated the Egyptian economy and for many years the investment authority examined investment applications so rigorously that it frightened many investors away.

"The authority has changed tack 180 degrees," Mr. Fawzi said. "It used to investigate the intentions of the investor, the identity of the investors, everything. Now we stand on the

investor's side and our role in promoting investment has increased."

Mr. Fawzi's figures for 1996 show that foreign investment in Egypt by Arabs continues to outdo investment by non-Arabs, at 1,996 million pounds in the 11-month period against 1,102 million pounds by non-Arab investors.

The figures for the same period of 1995 were 477 million and 271 million pounds, giving a total of 748 million.

Arabs invest most in the tourism sector non-Arab foreigners in industrial projects.

Egyptians applied to invest far more — 9,175 million pounds — but the rate of increase was lower, at 114 per cent over 1995.

The biggest projects approved in 1996 were a fertiliser complex at Burg Al Arab near Alexandria, with a capital of 475 million pounds, and a cement plant at Beni Suef south of Cairo, with a capital of 355 million pounds.

REUTERS

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NUG	FRF
US Dollar	1.5522	0.5981	1.3367	114.00	1.3666	1528.50	1.7482	5.2478	
DE Mark	0.6430		0.3840	0.8856	73.27	0.6781	982.33	1.1227	3.3735
GB Sterling	1.6720	2.6019		2.2361	190.71	2.2850	2555.65	2.9198	8.7740
CH Franc	0.7481	1.1621	0.4468		85.27	1.0207	1142.38	130.49	3.9219
JP Yen	0.0088	1.3832	0.5237	1.1716		1.1977	13.40	152.83	4.5943
CA Dollar	0.7317	1.1408	0.4394	0.9793	1.20		1121.67	1.2607	3.8558
IT Lira	0.0007	1.0163	0.3908	0.0874	1342.10	0.8935		11.41	3.4301
NL Guilder	0.5727	89.03	0.3423	78.58	85.33	0.7826	875.04		3.0044
FR Franc	0.1906	0.2963	0.1138	26.4656	21.72	0.2603	33.26	33.2500	

Energy			
Oils	Last	Previous	
Brent	24.20	24.35	
WTI	23.75	26.05	
Bony	24.20	24.35	
Dubai	21.38	21.82	
UL Gas	214.00	214.00	

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4152	0.15947	0.3571	30.434
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.42368	0.16286	0.3647	31.08
KW Dinar	3.3367	5.19481	1.95561	4.4828	380.007
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.13652	1.58655	3.5524	302.755
CY Pound	2.1167	3.2951	1.2658	2.832	241.608

Metal Prices			
Metal	Bid	Offer	
Gold (oz)	358.5	369	
Silver (oz)	4.83	4.85	
Platinum (oz)	371.75	372.75	
AL (3 Months)	1552	1553	
CU (3 Months)	2132	2133	
Zinc (3 Months)	1065	0	
Lead (3 Months)	707	708	
NI (3 Months)	6510	6520	

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)						
Period	1 -	3 -	6 -	9 -	1 -	
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Months	Year	
USD	5.47	5.48	5.50	5.55	5.65	
GBP	6.12	6.38	6.58	6.62	6.94	
JPY	0.19	0.24	0.40	0.53	0.35	
DEM	3.06	3.18	3.11	3.60	3.16	
FRF	3.29	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.31	
CHF	2.12	2.00	1.90	1.81	1.90	
ITL	7.30	7.07	6.70	6.55	6.42	

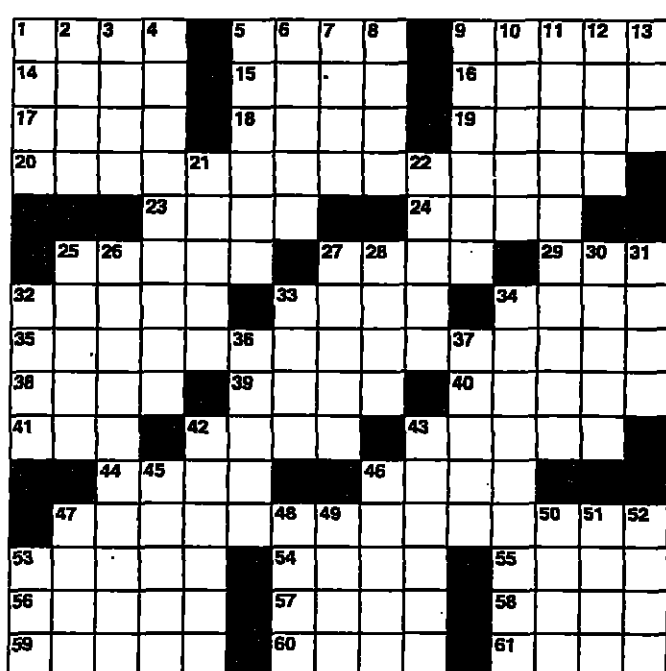
Energy			
Commodity	Last	Delivery	
Coffee (c/lb)	118.92	Spot	
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1388	Spot	
Sugar (\$/ton)	310.9	Spot	
Wheat (\$/ton)	132	Spot	
Soy (\$/lb)	21.69	Spot	
Tea (\$/lb)	125	Spot	
Barley (\$/bsh)	218	Spot	
Rice (\$/ton)	470	Spot	

JOD Cross Rates			
Currency	Buy	Sell	
US Dollar	0.708	0.710	
GB Sterling	1.1822	1.1851	
DE Mark	0.4559	0.4582	
CH Franc	0.8302	0.8329	
FR Franc	0.135	0.1357	
JP Yen	0.619	0.6221	
NL Guilder	0.4065	0.4085	
IT Lira	0.4633	0.4656	

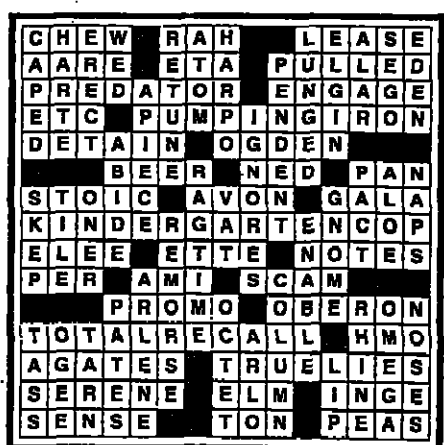
Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Winter pear
 - Some actors
 - donna
 - Parrot
 - Exchange premium
 - Continue
 - Broad collar
 - "Porgy and —"
 - Spinet kin
 - Wayne western
 - the night...
 - Artist Magritte
 - moi le deluge
 - "The Lion King" villain
 - State: abbr.
 - Courtyards
 - Asian ruler
 - Be borne
 - Conundrum choice
 - Play a piccolo
 - Roman historian
 - of God
 - Part of Russia, once: abbr.
 - Outcome
 - Dixie dish
 - Make money
 - Permits
 - Hot under the collar
 - Score
 - Protracted
 - See the world
 - Palm tree
 - Layered mineral
 - Tip or top
 - Sleuth's workload
 - Did in
 - User's fee

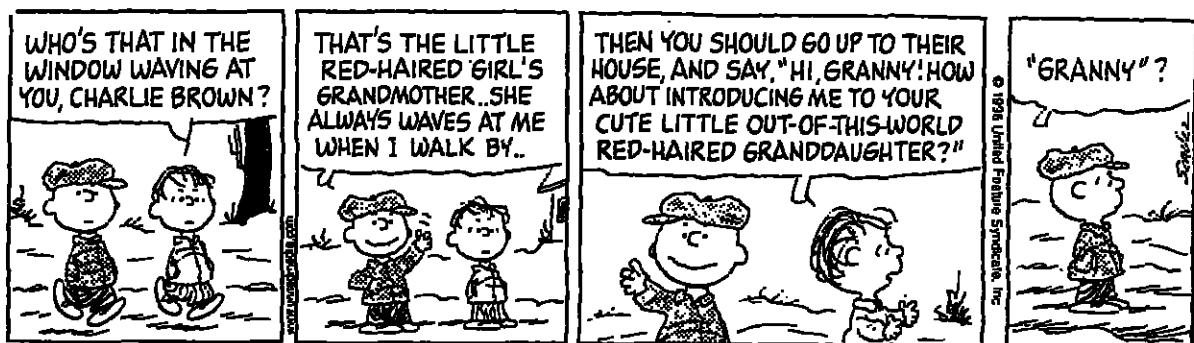


by Richard Thomas



- DOWN
- Suds
 - Numeric start
 - Beat it
 - Shrink
 - corpus
 - Ripening factors
 - Assorted: abbr.
 - Mediocre
 - Detective
 - Second showing
 - Recipe item
 - Not nice
 - Bristlelike appendage
 - Pinch and twist
 - "Indiscreet" star
 - Dumas character
 - Religious leaders
 - off (depart)
 - See 22D
 - Noses out
 - Tripped parts
 - Deeds
 - Unite
 - Campus official
 - Kudu kin
 - Writer Bret
 - Free-for-all
 - Trinket
 - Cleric's vestment
 - Old weapon
 - Emanation
 - Largess
 - Dirty
 - "Chicago —"
 - Balanced
 - Barber's call
 - Fleetwood —

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A worldly affair can be confusing today, however you can get into new interests and make big headway with them. Later this evening you can get together with close friends and go out on the town for some fun times.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Remain steadfast to your own way of life today and don't run off to something you know little about and thereby you can gain the admiration of a bigwig. Later this evening you can relax at home with your loved ones.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Postpone a responsibility today so that you can do whatever pleases your mate, thereby you can relieve any difficulties. Use your mature judgment later this evening and make a plan of action which will be successful.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) If you follow through on some outside affair today, it could mean difficulty. Keep busy at your regular career activities and thereby you can gain the respect and admiration of a bigwig who can make you successful.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Don't try to fool your mate today, however face the situation honestly and wisely and everything will be well between you. Later this evening make every effort to complete a new project which has been put on the back burner.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Public matters could confuse you today, so handle them in the days ahead. Spend time with your mate later this evening and he or she will respond to your romantic intentions in quite a pleasant manner.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Make sure you are precise today in handling your career activities and avoid making mistakes. Travel about town tonight and be happy with close friends and thereby you can make them feel that they are important in your life.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Try to calm down a good friend who is having a difficult time and show that you truly do care about his or her feelings. Be supportive later this evening of a fellow associate and you can gain his or her respect.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Some situation at home today will right itself, so don't worry about it. Take your mate out for a fine dinner, dancing at some special location which you have both been before and you can rekindle those romantic feelings.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Plan how best today, to handle some problematical affair concerning papers, etc., which have you baffled and thereby you can solve the mystery. Later this evening will be good for you to relax with your loved ones at home.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Be sure you get more information today before you try to handle a business matter which is difficult to do at this time. Later this evening will be good for you to seek out the advice of a knowledgeable person and discuss your options.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) You are rather confused about what to do today, however later this evening you get many fine ideas for advancement which should be discussed with those in authority and follow through with their advice.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon.

Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic press

Civil Service Commission finds thousands of unemployed 'working'

**** MORE THAN 60 per cent out of a total 125,000 persons registered as unemployed at the Civil Service Commission (CSC) are actually working at private sector institutions.** CSC President Abdullah Ulayyan said that this fact was ascertained after checking the national code number for the job applicants at both the CSC and the Social Security Corporation (SSC). "More than 60 per cent of all applicants seeking government jobs were found to have a number at the SSC, which was also receiving deductions from the salaries they were earning from private sector employers," Dr. Ulayyan asserted.

The CSC chief indicated that 50,000 applicants registered as unemployed were really without work but he noted that 70 per cent of them were community college graduates and that also 70 per cent of them were females. Dr. Ulayyan also revealed that there was nearly full employment in the southern governorates of the country for all holders of university degrees in the teaching professions. He noted that 'unemployment in the areas of teaching' begins to rise in the

central and northern regions of the Kingdom.

Dr. Ulayyan said that the Administrative Development Council has presented to the Prime Ministry two records, one listing the names of those who are not actually working and another for those who are employed at institutions under the umbrella of the SSC and who enjoy "employment stability." He added that a Cabinet decision is expected shortly giving priority to those who are not working (Al Aswaaq).

Social Security Corporation amends deduction calculation

**** THE SOCIAL Security Corporation (SSC) has sent a circular to all commercial, industrial, banking and other concerned institutions informing them that starting January 1997, deductions from the salaries of their employees should be on the basis of the total wages and not on the basic salary as the calculation is now being made.** The total wages include all the amount paid by the employers to their workers except the overtime payments.

The higher deduction will make retirement payments to the beneficiaries much bigger as now it is not sufficient to meet the requirement of old age, a senior union official said (Al Dustouri).

Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt bourses to link from Jan. 6 '97

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — The bourses of Kuwait, Lebanon and Egypt will be linked from the first week of 1997 easing the way for investors in one market to buy stocks in another, a stock exchange official has said.

From Jan. 6, investors from all three Arab stock exchanges "can buy from the three markets as on one market," Saffaq Al Rokaibi, secretary general of the Union of Arab Stock Exchanges, told AFP.

Mr. Rokaibi, also director of Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) technical department, said share prices from each bourse will be relayed immediately to the other trading floors.

Investors can then advise their local brokers to buy and sell shares through agents at the other two stock exchanges with each deal guaranteed by local clearing houses as soon as a transaction is completed.

Previously, investors had to approach a broker on another stock exchange directly and transfer funds with no guarantee that the deal had gone through.

Mr. Rokaibi said there are still restrictions for Egyptian or Lebanese investors wanting to buy Kuwaiti shares, as investors from outside Arab Gulf countries are only allowed to directly hold stocks in two listed mutual funds.

"We are trying to change the rules of this to let foreigners own Kuwaiti stock companies," Mr. Rokaibi said, referring to long-awaited plans to introduce a new law that will allow greater foreign participation.

The Kuwaiti market is the most active of the three bourses, although Cairo is growing fast as Egypt's privatisation process gathers pace, while Beirut is still finding its feet after reopening less than a year ago.

The Kuwaiti bourse is also expected to sign an agreement Tuesday to link it with the Omani and Bahraini markets, the only other Arab Gulf states to have formal stock exchanges, a Bahraini official was quoted as saying last week.

Arab Gulf businessmen seek more foreign investment

DOHA (R) — Arab Gulf business leaders have said their countries had to do more to lure private and foreign investment to help diversify their oil-driven economies.

The Federation of the Trade and Industry Chambers in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also demanded speedy market reforms to enable them to compete in the global economy.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates — which sit on 45 per cent of world oil reserves

— should encourage more technology transfers in any future joint ventures, they added after a two-day meeting in Doha. "The meeting calls for...putting forward a clear Gulf economic strategy to attract (foreign) investments since these countries form one economic bloc," they said in a statement.

"They (GCC states) have to prepare an economic map, including projects in all sectors, especially processing industries, to allow local and foreign investors a chance to look into

investment opportunities," it added.

Gulf business leaders stressed the need to insist that foreign investors participate in research and in training their national manpower. The Gulf relies heavily on expatriate labour.

The meeting underlined the need to "improve their investment climate...through improving legislation that impedes the flow of foreign capital and easing administrative procedures".

This would help repatriate Gulf capital invested abroad — independently estimated at

\$350 billion.

Foreign businessmen have cited lengthy bureaucratic procedures in the GCC as a serious obstacle to investment.

The seminar called for development of infrastructure in GCC states, especially water and electricity, through "modern investment and finance formulas" to attract investors.

The meeting applauded the trend towards creating more free zones in GCC states and said future industries should look for marketing outlets beyond national borders.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDAN											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607178											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 23/12/1996											
PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	PAST 12 MONTHS LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE	
259.500	205.000	ARAB BANK	13.7	1.40	6	440	110390	251.00	253.50	-.50	
1.250	.880	MID.EAST INV.BK.	68.3	0.00	41	26000	27408	1.04	1.04	-.00	
5.250	4.250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.6	2.94	3	850	3995	4.75	4.70	-.05	
3.040	2.440	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	18.9	0.00	9	1087	4627	2.75	2.75	-.00	
1.120	.860	JOR. GULF BANK	5.7	7.29	8	12500	12010	.98	.96	-.01	
4.180	3.300	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	17.6	0.00	10	1557	5701	3.67	3.66	-.01	
3.150	1.900	UNION BK.SAV.INV.	9	0.00	2	1300	2345	1.45	1.43	-.02	
1.550	1.000	PHILADEL. INV.BK.	9	0.00	4	903	1154	1.28	1.28	-.00	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 191.57			CHNG: -0.23			83 45797 168430		
4.550	.000	JERUSALEM INSUR.	11.5	4.71	1	50	213	4.35	4.25	-.10	
2.840	.830	JOR.FRENCH INSUR.	5.6	10.15	2	350	689	1.96	1.97	-.01	
2.400	.850	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	7.4	8.21	3	2050	3998	2.05	1.95	-.10	
5.090	.700	ALFISR AL-ARABI	13.0	3.93	13	5800	28675	4.85	5.09	-.24	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 117.03			CHNG: -0.11			19 8250 33574		
1.830	1.450	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	11.4	7.32	19	9038	14829	1.65	1.64	-.01	
1.560	1.250	IRSID ELECTRICITY	9.5	6.90	2	1000	1450	1.42	1.45	-.03	
1.830	1.080	NATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	10	3200	3823	1.20	1.20	-.00	
1.050	.870	REAL ESTATE INV.	19.1	4.23	1	500	258	.88	.86	-.02	
1.260	.880	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	13.1	5.57	10	11087	8744	1.79	1.80	-.01	
2.300	1.490	MID. EAST HOTELS	67.6	0.00	3	1000	1570	1.59	1.57	-.02	
3.720	3.130	ARAB INTL. INV. EDUC.	13.7	5.78	4	5850	20185	3.46	3.46	-.00	
1.250	.960	NATKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	3	1300	1378	1.07	1.06	-.01	
2.310	1.890	UNIFIED CO.	10.7	4.95	15	4500	9215	2.07	2.03	-.04	
1.200	.820	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	2	2500	2250	.89	.90	-.01	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 112.39			CHNG: -0.31			69 39775 63701		
3.740	3.060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.4	2.94	15	3182	10791	3.39	3.40	-.01	
3.580	2.710	JOR.PHOSPHATE MINES	15.0	0.00	2	377	329	3.29	3.25	-.04	
10.450	8.720	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	9.8	8.29	13	1716	16589	9.67	9.65	-.02	
1.590	1.150	WOOLLEN INDUSTRIES	56.8	0.00	14	6600	8507	1.28	1.28	-.00	
3.750	1.650	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	58.0	0.00	3	400	1168	3.01	2.90	-.11	
4.720	3.000	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	19.7	5.57	10	2591	1310	3.61	3.59	-.02	
2.400	1.570	JOR. PIPES MANFCT.	9.0	7.36	3	495	806	1.65	1.63	-.02	
7.850	4.250	DAR ALDINA DV. INV.	13.3	4.12	3	700	3273	4.84	4.85	-.01	
5.900	3.130	ARAB ALUM. IND.	8.7	8.57	2	154	539	3.65	3.50	-.15	
1.940	.450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	45	44350	28339	.63	.64	-.01	
1.460	1.060	ARAB PAPER CONV. TRD.	7.8	9.01	6	5000	5750	1.15	1.15	-.00	
1.800	1.200	NATIONAL STEEL IND.	9	0.00	1	1000	1200	1.20	1.20	-.00	
1.060	.840	NATIONAL TDS.	11.4	7.79	74	101200	76956	.75	.77	-.02	
1.750	.930	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	14	5350	6046	1.12	1.13	-.01	
3.550	2.280	UNIV. CHEM. IND.	77.5	0.00	1	250	733	2.97	2.93	-.04	
4.700	3.420	ALADDIN CO.	21.0	3.20	2	300	1365	3.70	3.75	-.05	
4.000	2.130	NATL. CABLE WIRE. NFAC	16.4	0.00	4	500	1356	2.80	2.70	-.10	
1.850	1.080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	27.7	0.00	2	550	814	1.50	1.48	-.02	
1.250	.840	UNIV. HOUS. TDS.	5.3	11.43	9	3200	5608	1.75	1.75	-.00	
2.080	1.140	JOR. INDS. RESOURCES	16.2	0.00	8	3350	4344	1.31	1.29	-.02	
1.500	.840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	26.6	0.00	12	8650	5818	.99	.98	-.01	
1.448	1.360	INTEL. TOBACCO	30.6	0.00	24	51000	67200	1.31	1.30	-.01	
1.650	.930	UNION CH. & VEG.	24.1	0.00	10	5750	5618	.99	.98	-.01	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS			INDEX: 115.34			CHNG: -0.33			278 24644 265115		
GRAND TOTAL			INDEX: 151.56			CHNG: -0.27			449 340263 530819		
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 23/12/1996											
.790	.440	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	21.7	0.00	11	8500	4605	.55	.54	-.01	
.800	.510	JOR. TRADE PAC.	14.4	0.00	8	4250	2295	.54	.54	-.00	
.950	.510	NATL. COINER. CENTERS	9	0.00	10	6100	2753	.44	.45	-.01	
.890	.700	UNION INV. 507	69.8	0.00	4	1820	418	.73	.73	-.00	
1.060	.370	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	21	47600	21896	.46	.46	-.00	
1.050	.690	AL-DAMIRY 754	15.6	0.00	1	150	65	.70	.69	-.01	
.640	.340	JOR. INDS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	4	1750	635	.37	.38	-.01	
.810	.510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	9	0.00	3	425	268	.63	.63	-.00	
1.760	1.300	NATL. CHLORINE	9	0.00	1	500	700	1.43	1.43	-.00	
.700	.450	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	9	0.00	11	14750	7573	.50	.51	-.01	
1.030	.400	NATL. MULT. ENG. NAMICO	9	0.00	44	71990	35652	.48	.50	-.02	
.420	.270	RAYSEN DIES & MOULDS	9	0.00	2	500	290	.51	.50	-.01	
.170	.120	JORDAN STEEL	9	0.00	5	1275	961	.76	.75	-.01	
1.330	1.020	UNION TOBACCO 751	9	0.00	8	1732	1401	1.05	1.06	-.01	
.810	.570	RAZI PHARM. 654	25.9	0.00	13	9500	2475	.61	.61	-.00	
.810	.390	YDS. EGS.	9	0.00	18	15500	6510	.42	.42	-.00	
1.430	.760	INDS. CERAMIC	9	0.00	4	21200	16960	.80	.80	-.00	
.590	.760	1. TEXTILE MANUF.	9	0.00	2	750	375	.49	.50	-.01	
.900	.580	PEARL SAW. P. CONV.	9	0.00	32	52126	37468	.70	.73	-.03	
.850	.390	NATL. POULTRY	9	0.00	1	250	165	.64	.66	-.02	
1.500	.530	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.9	0.00	10	6500	4293	.66	.67	-.01	
GRAND TOTAL						212 267168 147737					

↑ New 12 months low
↓ Lowest 12 months low
P/E ratio is 100 or more
E: Negative P/E
E: Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year

* New 12 months low
* Listed during the past 12 months
* P/E ratio in 100 or more
* Negative P/E
* Earning is zero or N/A for the most recent year

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THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"He's got \$10,000 worth of TV, stereo and computer equipment...and he yells at me if I leave a light bulb turned on!"

JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DAUGY

PYMUB

YUPRIF

LAPLID

Print answer here: THE

Yesterday's Jumbles: BARGE THYME YEARLY NIMBLE
Answer: What a bedtime story can become - A GRIMM TALE

JORDAN MARKETPLACE * JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE**

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Hebron remains under curfew after violence

Palestinian police prevent Israelis from setting up outpost near Gaza settlement

HEBRON (AFP) — Palestinians stoned Israeli soldiers in Hebron on Monday as the army maintained a curfew in the city's old quarter for the second day running following a spate of firebombings of Jewish enclaves, residents said.

With tensions running high amid reports that Israeli and Palestinian negotiators were nearing agreement on the extension of Palestinian self-rule to Hebron, troops arrested two young men for throwing stones at soldiers, witnesses said.

On Sunday, suspected Palestinian militants threw three firebombs at Jewish enclaves where some 420 zealous settlers live surrounded by 120,000 Palestinians in the most tense of West Bank cities.

No injuries were caused directly by the attacks, but one firebomb knocked a ladder leading to an army observation point onto the ground where it hurt two Palestinian men.

Rumours quickly spread that the men had been

attacked by settlers and dozens of Israelis and Palestinians congregated in a tense stand-off until troops cleared them out and imposed the curfew in a market near the Jewish areas, forcing Palestinian shopkeepers to close.

Also on Sunday a bomb tore apart a wooden shelter at a hitch-hiking stop used by soldiers and settlers near the West Bank self-rule town of Hebron, but no one was hurt.

The incidents underscored the risks involved in the drawn out stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations focusing on Israel's overdue troop withdrawal from Hebron.

Palestinian police prevented the Israeli army from setting up an observation post in the second such dispute outside a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, a security chief said.

Saeb Al Ajiz, the head of Palestinian security for north Gaza, said Israeli soldiers from the Netzarim settlement brought out equipment to set up the station on a nearby coastal road.

"Palestinian police intervened and prevented them from setting it up and the soldiers returned to Netzarim without incident," Mr. Ajiz said.

A previous attempt by the army to set up the station on Dec. 18 caused a tense armed stand-off with Palestinian police, who brought out nearly 100 armed police to barricade the road to Netzarim.

Palestinian security said the army agreed not to set up the station after the stand-off of several hours.

The Palestinians say the location along the Mediterranean beach road lies outside Netzarim's security zone and cannot be used for Israeli army posts.

Israeli officers said the army wanted to reestablish an observation position it had maintained until a year ago to monitor movements off the Mediterranean coast.

Eighty-six people were killed in clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in late September.



PROTEST: Belgrade students blow whistles and show the three-fingered Serbian Orthodox victory sign on the 36th day of protest marches against election rigging, in Belgrade on Monday. Thousands of demonstrators against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic ignored the onset of the harsh Balkan winter to march along the streets of Serbia demanding their victory at local elections be restored (Reuters photo)

Arab League praises Gulf states

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid has praised the "courageous stand" taken by Gulf states which have decided to freeze the process of normalisation of relations with Israel.

"We consider that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) resolutions constitute a clear announcement of a freeze in the process of normalisation with Israel," he told the Kuwaiti daily Al Anbaa in an interview published on Monday.

The six members of the GCC decided at a summit this month to review their fledgling ties with Israel because of the headline approach towards the peace process by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Qatar and Oman opened trade ties with Israel this year under accords with the previous Labour government of Prime Minister Shimon Peres, but later froze further steps towards normalisation.

The other GCC states — Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — have refrained from establishing ties with Israel, although they support the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Abdul Meguid described the GCC decision as a "courageous stand" and also welcomed moves by North African countries to halt or delay normalisation with Israel.

The Arab League chief said the situation in the Middle East was "dangerous" because of Israel's "obstinate stand" and it would be "responsible for any deterioration in the security situation because of its erroneous policies."

Government rejects charges of 'unnecessary' delays in implementing royal amnesty

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government on Monday refuted allegations that electioneering by members of the Council of Ministers were delaying the release of prisoners under a pardon granted by His Majesty the King last month and said the procedures for the release were on course.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher also rejected the notion that the amnesty was a general pardon and noted that the Nov. 12 Royal decree granting it made it clear that it was a "special amnesty" and authorised the government to set the parameters that qualify prisoners for release.

However, the minister did not provide a definite date for the start of the prisoner release but pointed out that a first list of 107 people was approved by the Council of Ministers and forwarded to King Hussein for his endorsement.

Dr. Muasher said he believed that a second list was also almost finalised but he could not provide any numbers.

"The procedures for the release of prisoners under the amnesty are on the right course regardless of the personal opinion of some," said the minister in an apparent reference to articles appearing in the local press asserting that the process was being delayed unnecessarily.

The information minister, addressing a regular weekly

press briefing, said the delay in drawing up the list was only natural because of the complexity of the work involved in setting the basis for the release and then identifying those who qualify for freedom under the basis.

"First of all a ministerial council discussed the entire issue and drew up the parameters for anyone to qualify for release under the special pardon," said Dr. Muasher.

"Then the full Council of Ministers approved the parameters," he added, emphasising that "this was done before any names or cases were even mentioned."

That was an implicit rejection of assertions in the local press that members of the Cabinet had sought to include prisoners from their respective constituencies in the pardon with an eye on the parliamentary elections coming up next year.

"Of course it was natural that different viewpoints were expressed (during the Council of Ministers deliberations on the issue), but this does not mean that they held up the process," said Dr. Muasher.

"Quite simply, that is the way things should be done and were done."

"In fact," he added, "such differing viewpoints and deliberations are a healthy aspect of democratic life in the Kingdom."

Rafsanjani says U.S. military complex bombers were Saudis

DUBAI (Agencies) — Iran has received information that the bombers of a U.S. military complex in Saudi Arabia were Saudi citizens, President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said on Monday.

"What we have heard officially is that those involved are Saudi citizens and that some escaped from the kingdom and possibly came to Iran," Mr. Rafsanjani said.

"We had searched for them carefully and have found no trace of them in Iran. One of them is called Mauroof and was said to be in Iran, then it was discovered that he had died in a Syrian jail," he added, but did not elaborate.

Mr. Rafsanjani, who was speaking in an interview published on Monday in the Saudi-owned London-based Al Sharq Al Awsat, did not say who provided Iran with the official information.

He said Iran carried out a full investigation into reports linking it to the June 25 bombing in which 19 U.S. airmen were killed in the eastern Saudi city of Khobar.

"We carried out comprehensive investigation into the issue and did not find any indication linking the issue to any of our government institutions in Iran. We had ruled this out from the start considering government institutions in Iran oppose such acts," he added.

U.S. media reports had linked Iran to the bombing and said some of the bombers had been to Iran and received training at pro-Iranian Hizbollah camps in Lebanon.

Iranian officials have denied the charges and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said in Tehran on Sunday that Iran "categorically rejects the charges no matter who raises them."

The U.S. administration has said it had not yet concluded who was responsible for the bombing, but Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has said the U.S. media reports indicated Washington was preparing to attack Iran.

Saudi Arabia has said the U.S. media reports were unreliable and added that it would announce the results of the probe into the bombing without delay.

"There are countries in the world which do not have good intentions towards Iran... they intend to accuse Iran in a bid to secure their illegitimate interests (in the region)," Mr. Velayati said Sunday.

Mr. Velayati was speaking on the sidelines of a seminar on the development and security of the Gulf region, which sits on more than half the world's oil reserves.

"Tehran does not fear the threats of any country, no matter how powerful it may be," Mr. Velayati said in reference to the media reports that Washington was preparing to attack Iran if proved involved in the bombing.

Mr. Velayati earlier told the seminar that only the withdrawal of U.S. and other Western troops patrolling the Gulf from the region would guarantee its security and stability.

"The withdrawal of foreign forces from the... Gulf can be regarded as a sign of respect for the independence and sovereignty of regional countries... once the people in the region get rid of the foreign forces and culture, they will have a peaceful and stable region," he added.

Kurds fear Iraqi reprisals after spy confessions, new rebel group says

AMMAN (AFP) — The Kurds of northern Iraq fear reprisals by Baghdad after the dismantling of an alleged U.S. spy network run out of Iraqi Kurdistan, a new opposition movement said Monday.

The "Rally of Iraqi Opposition Factions," in a statement dated from the northern town of Zakho, said it was formed from 10 small groups, including army officers, Shiite Muslims, intellectuals and the Turcoman minority.

The aim of the new movement is to establish a "democratic and federated Iraq," said the statement sent to AFP in Amman.

But the Kurds of northern Iraq fear reprisals by Baghdad after last week's confessions broadcast on Iraqi television of alleged spies for the U.S. intelligence service CIA who said their contacts were based in Iraqi Kurdistan.

"The recent Iraqi initiative aims to prepare public opinion for an operation against the opposition movements in Kurdistan," said the Rally of Iraqi Opposition Factions.

"Several attacks have already been carried out by agents of Baghdad against members of opposition groups," it said, without giving details.

The group also charged that some 2,500 people, mostly Kurds working for U.S. aid agencies and their families, "who are supposed to have been evacuated by the United States are still in Zakho," on the border with Turkey.

It warned that "these people are in a precarious humanitarian situation" because Washington had delayed their departure until

next month. The State Department said on Dec. 16 that it has completed the evacuation of 3,780 Kurdish aid workers and their families from Turkey to the U.S. outpost of Guam in the Pacific.

The aid workers were the third and largest wave of Kurds to be taken out of northern Iraq since President Saddam Hussein's troops made an incursion into the Kurdish "safe haven" in late August.

In defiance of Baghdad, the Kurds have controlled northern Iraq under a U.S.-led security umbrella since the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war over Kuwait.

Turkey's Anatolia news agency said nearly 2,500 members of the Iraqi opposition fearing reprisals by the Baghdad regime have asked the United States to evacuate them from northern Iraq.

Washington has already evacuated in three rounds nearly 8,000 people, mainly Kurds formerly working for U.S. agencies in the area and opposition members, following Baghdad's August military intervention in northern Iraq.

Anatolia said the new group of opposition members, including Arabs, Kurds and Turcomans, had gathered in Zakho near the border with Turkey.

A joint statement released by the 2,500 people requested their evacuation by the United States and also asked for help from Britain, France and Turkey, the agency said.

Fighting flared in northern Iraq in August when a leading Kurdish group, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), supported by

Baghdad troops, attacked the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The KDP of Massud Barzani and the PUK of Jalal Talabani declared a truce on Oct. 23 after heavy diplomatic pressure by the United States.

The fragile ceasefire is still holding but the two sides have not signed a peace agreement yet.

Official Tehran Radio said Monday some 65,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees have returned to northern Iraq from Iran and only about 5,000 remain in camps along the border.

The radio said the Iranian interior ministry was considering shifting the remaining 5,000 from camps along the Iraq-Iran border to another region.

Tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds fled northern Iraq for Iran in September after the KDP-PUK fighting.

Most of the refugees began returning home a month ago with the onset of winter in the mountainous border region.

Iranian authorities have insisted that the return of the refugees has been voluntary, but some international humanitarian organisations, which have reported cases of children dying of cold, claim they were forced to go home.

Tehran has said it has done all it could to accommodate the refugees and complained of insufficient aid from the world community.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has called on Iranian authorities on several occasions to shift the remaining refugees to an area with a more hospitable climate.

Likud's silence hints approval of Bar-Illan views on 'demilitarised' Palestinian state

By David Makovsky
The Jerusalem Post

NEITHER Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu nor any member of the Likud has publicly disavowed remarks by the premier's senior advisor David Bar-Illan who indicated support for a demilitarised Palestinian state.

The only public remarks from the premier's office over the last three days have come from Cabinet Secretary Danny Naveh, who said: "We are in a new situation where

everything is open." In a strong hint of approval, Naveh said the government would fight against the establishment of a "militarised Palestinian state."

Foreign reporters, who had prescheduled interviews with the premier, have not obtained a denial from Mr. Netanyahu. Instead, the premier has sought to skirt the issue. Excerpts of Mr. Bar-Illan's statements, in an interview last week with The Jerusalem Post, have been brought to the attention of Arab leaders in recent

days. Aryeh Naor, a former cabinet secretary to Menachem Begin, said last night that he views Mr. Bar-Illan's comments as part of a wider trend.

"There seems to be an ideological revolution in the right," he said, "as they are detaching themselves from the Greater Israel ideology. It all started during the election campaign when Netanyahu decided he would appear better as someone closer to the centre. If Mr. Bar-Illan, who is considered to be a true believer in Likud ideology,

talks this way, this tells you there is a new spirit of the times."

Labour MK Yossi Beilin said Mr. Bar-Illan's comments can be seen as important, adding momentum to Mr. Beilin's goal to create a consensus between Likud and Labour MKs on the shape of a final status map. Mr. Beilin said he expects the group to reach a final document next month after seven meetings and an estimated 40 hours of discussions.

Column 8

Vietnam province offers reward for mouse tails

HANOI (R) — Villagers in Vietnam's Ha Tinh province have been offered a reward for each mouse tail they bring in from the fields, the Lao Dong newspaper said. "Hamlet leaders have asked each family to come up with seven or eight mouse tails per 360 square metres of land," it said. "They will receive 200-300 dong (1.3-2.7 U.S. cents) for every tail." The newspaper said that in one village of the central province, nine million dong (\$308) had already been paid out for 45,000 tails. A total of 420,000 had been collected in the district of Huong Son, it added, without indicating who counted the tails or what would be done with them.

Press wreck homes to gain best view at Peru siege

LIMA (R) — Hundreds of journalists swarming around the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima have wreaked havoc on neighbouring homes in their bid to secure the best view of the 5-day-old siege, witnesses said. The owners of one home, which suffered broken water pipes and electricity cables, had given water to the 17 reporters on their roof and allowed them to use the bathroom. While some journalists tried to make amends and collected money to pay for repairs, neighbours struck back. Some residents charged for access to their roofs and one woman locked her house up and went away, leaving photographers stranded on the roof.

Mayor in Turkey bans turkey

ISTANBUL (R) — Islamist local government officials in the central Turkish town of Sincan have banned the sale of Turkey and will put up signs calling for a boycott of New Year celebrations, a Turkish newspaper said. "Do not celebrate the New Year. New Year's Day is not our day. We are not Christians. Let's not be like them," the signs will read, together with verses from the Koran, the newspaper Radikal said. Bekir Yildiz, the Islamist mayor of Sincan, said he would block traders who attempt to sell turkey, common in many Turkish homes on New Year's Day. "We cannot have them sell sacrificial sheep in the market, so for this reason, turkeys won't be sold either," Mr. Yildiz told the paper.

'Music is the food of love'

BRAZZAVILLE (AFP) — Congolese military police chief-cum composer general Makoumba N'zambi will this week take a break from official duties to release two cassettes of songs calling for harmony and an end to conflict. For N'zambi, whose musical pseudonym is Sebas Enemen, "music is an integral part of each human being and must celebrate the virtues of love." In the situation of "armed conflicts and inter-ethnic clashes" African artists must be "concerned by peace," he said. His song "Kuisa na Mbongi" (the tree where village elders gather for lengthy discussion) evokes in kituba, one of the Congolese national languages, the African traditions which reserve a revered place for "dialogue in settling conflicts." The melodic police boss "Hymn in Brazzaville" deplores the "murderous folly" of the political-ethnic clashes which killed over 2,000 people in the Congolese capital between June, 1993, and January, 1994. His songs are performed by a group of Congolese musicians and singers, together with another Congolese singer who performs in Ivory Coast, Judith N'deko.